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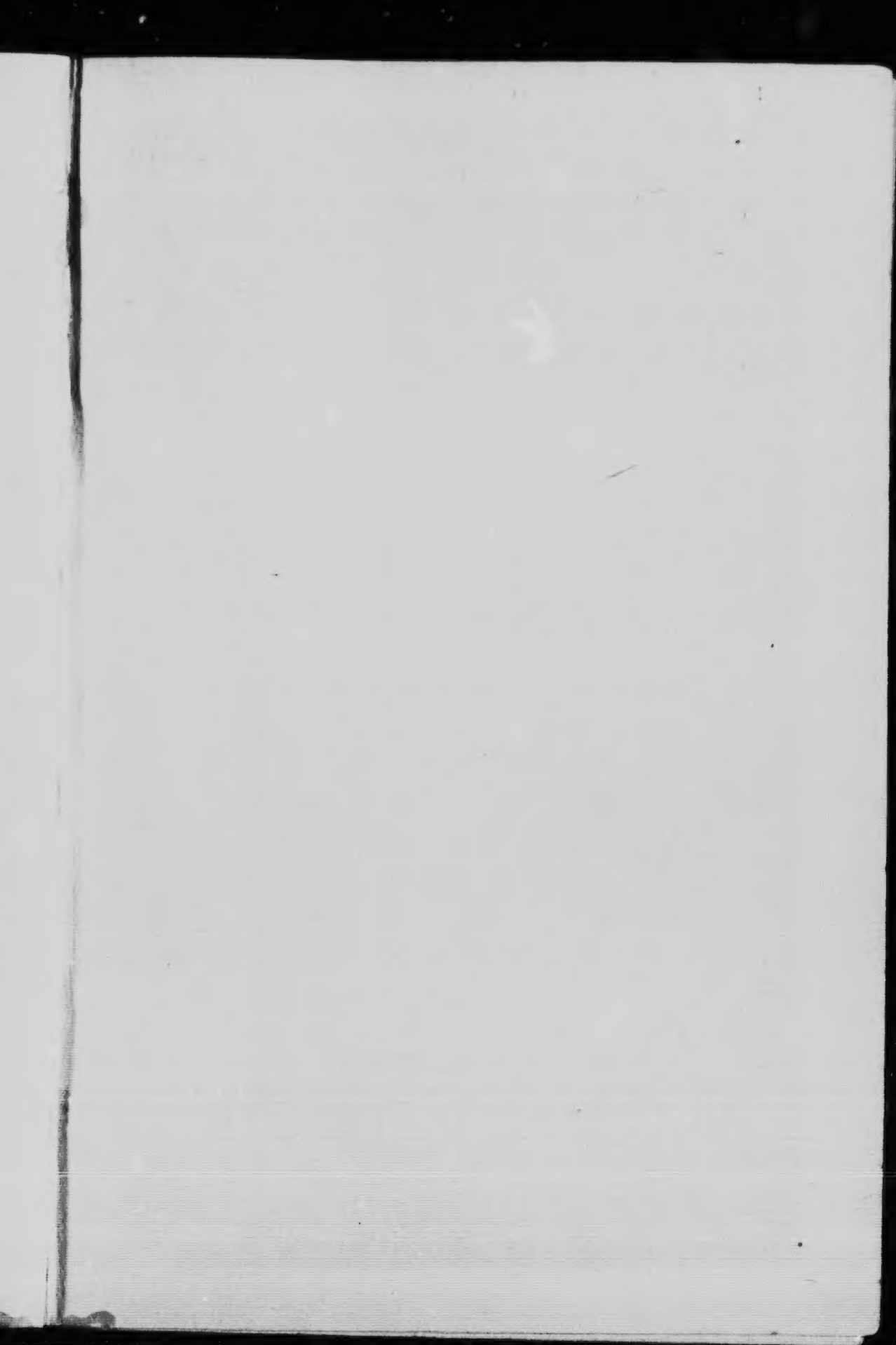
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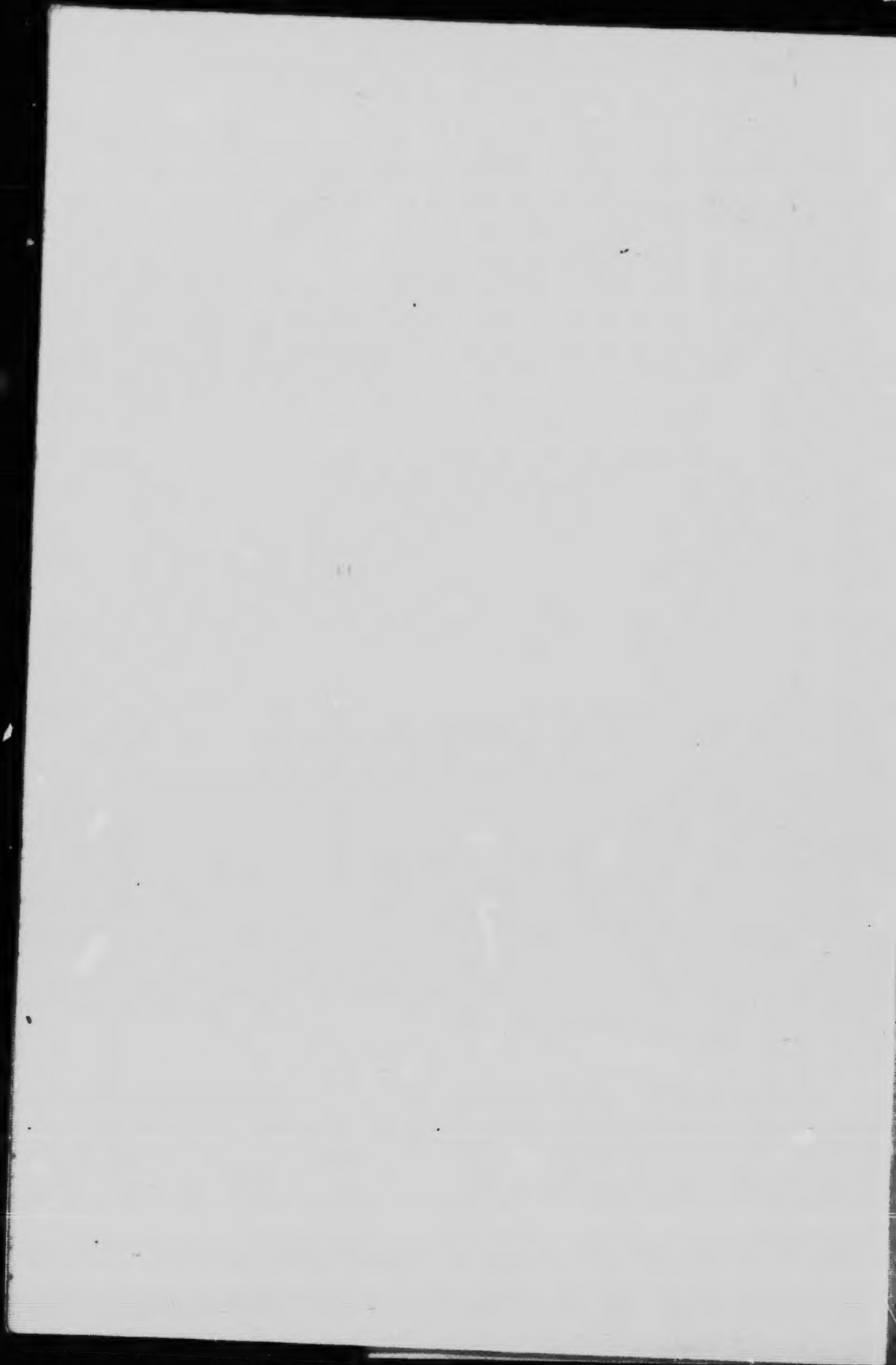
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MILLSTONE

By HAROLD BEGBIE

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FOREWORD

THIS story, in all its essential facts, is a true story. But it was written with no moral purpose. I wanted to tell, with the brevity and restraint which one so greatly admires in the best French fiction, an authentic story of human life, a story the *motif* of which should concern the questions of retribution, repentance, and forgiveness. It did not enter into my mind that I should tell this story with the intention of striking any blow at a well-known and universally accepted evil.

While I was writing the book, absorbed in the temperaments of my characters, there came to me by a strange chance irrefutable evidence of a most terrible nature concerning the depths of degradation into which quite little children are forced by the monsters to whom vice is only a means of earning money. I could not prevent myself from writing more earnestly, more courageously, yet I finished the book in the spirit which had conceived it; no shadow of a purpose was allowed to cross its pages.

But the War in Europe has come, and as I correct the proofs of my story I add to it the words which

I am now writing. I desire to say that here is a story of modern life essentially true, unexaggerated, and so tempered and repressed that its moderation might almost be used for a charge of unreality, nevertheless a story which may possibly serve, however humbly, to strengthen the minds of men and women for the great work of reconstructing human society which so soon will confront us. In that work of reconstruction, surely the foundations must be laid in reverence for women. Difficult as the question of women is, more difficult now than before this world-wide calamity of destruction, at least we must be rid of that inexpressible devilry which in defiling multitudes of women poisons the very springs of life and in degrading hosts of little children hangs about the neck of our civilisation the millstone of God.

For this reason, then, I do not greatly care, though I hate the term of "sensational novel," if this story of mine be dubbed with that ill name, so long as it helps to break up the darkness and awaken the silence in which hitherto vice has been able to pursue its work of pollution without challenge and almost without danger. If we would build well, it is necessary that we should work in the light.

MILLSTONE

CHAPTER I

"I've seen you before," said old Trewent, pulling at the oars of the ferry-boat and glancing suspiciously at the passenger. He had to shout on account of the wind.

The passenger, an oldish man, muffled in a heavy, snuff-coloured cloak, started lightly, but met the accusing glance of the boatman, and answered—

"I was here in the summer."

"What's that you say?" shouted Trewent, turning his right ear to the passenger. His small eyes were bloodshot and his under-lip stuck out sullenly beyond its truculent fellow.

"I said I was over here in the summer."

The boatman nodded his head. "Ah, I knew I'd set eyes on your face before this. Yankee, aren't you?"

"I'm an American; yes."

"I don't like Yankees much myself," continued

Trewent, "but I dare say I haven't seen the best of them." He spat over the side of the boat, and started to pull hard.

The passenger, looking away to the mist-covered sea, and pushing his cloak from beneath up to his chin, asked: "Many Americans come here?"

"Well, in summer time we get a tidy few; just for the day, you understand." The old fellow stopped rowing for a moment, rubbed the back of his hand across his mouth, which was beaded with sweat, and looked back over his shoulder to see that the passenger's luggage was safe in the bows. The clumsy boat, which smelt of tar and salt, at once began to roll in the waves; the strong tide carried it towards the sea.

A vicious wind was blowing from the north-east, and little spirts of fine spray could be seen scudding from the crest of the waves and making a haze of dust over the tossing water. The tone of the air was leaden, like the sea. Every now and then, however, the sun pierced the clouds and flickered over the unquiet waste, fading this leaden hue and giving a stormful note to the foaming crests of the waves; but there was no warmth in these wintry flashes. The day was hostile. Gulls overhead filled the wild heavens with a ceaseless discord of peevish lamentation. Sky, ocean and land were

commingled in a monotonous, long-suffering melancholy.

The passenger in the ferry-boat had driven in a cab from Swanscombe to the bank of the river from which you signal for the Sandspit ferry. He might have gone round by train from Swanscombe to Baskerton, an hour's journey, and thence have driven by cab to the Sandspit Hotel, a distance of nearly six miles over a rough road. He had preferred the shorter route in spite of the grey weather.

During a visit to Swanscombe in the summer he had walked one day across the Downs, had aimlessly followed the curve of the bay, and had discovered for himself the ferry and the Sandspit Hotel across the mouth of the river. He made a note of this discovery. For a year he had been travelling in England and Scotland, never staying more than a week or two in any one place, and scarcely speaking to a soul. In the Sandspit Hotel, which stands solitary on a narrow peninsula at the broad mouth of the river Baske, looking from a distance as if it were floating on the sea, he thought that he had found a place where he might rest for the winter.

It was an ugly, ark-like structure, this hotel, built of weather-boarding, and wearing the forlorn and

dejected appearance of a jerry builder's vision of a Swiss chalet. The wood was painted putty-colour, with the exception of the window-frames, which were a dull red. The roof was of chocolate-coloured tiles. You entered the grounds from one of the roughest roads in Devonshire, through a broad gateway flanked on either side by tall tamarisks. The drive was made of loose pebbles, through which the sand was for ever working its way. On two sides of the building flowed the divided river; the front faced towards the sea. Ships passed so close to the bay windows that the shadows of their sails would sometimes draw across the white tablecloths in the coffee-room.

From the middle of June till the end of September this hotel was always full of guests, and during that time motor-cars, coaches and char-à-bancs from Baskerton, and sailing-boats from Swanscombe, brought people to luncheon on nearly every day of the week. The place was famous for its lobsters and prawns. The proprietor, George Midgley, was said to be making a fortune. But Mrs. Midgley, who was the real genius of the establishment, complained that the season was too short for a livelihood.

"You won't be quite to yourself," shouted Trewent, beginning to row again.

"Other guests?"

"Eh?"

"Other people staying at the hotel?"

"Well, not just now." He jerked the boat's nose round to the river, and pulled a few sharp strokes to overcome the race of the tide. "We've got the engineer coming to stay with us who's in charge of the new water-works. A gentleman from London. Coming next week, I understand. You've heard of our new water-works, I suppose?"

"No."

Trewent raised his eyebrows, depressed his lips, and regarded the personage with a provincial Englishman's pitying contempt for the foreigner.

"It's been in the papers this six months," he said, rowing with anger. "Sandtown, you understand," he continued, "started to put in a new water-supply three months ago, after arguing about it a matter of three months and more. Well, my guv'nor, Mr. Midgley, made a claim to have the water brought out to the Spit; which is only right, seeing we pay taxes same as the folk in Sandtown. That was agreed." He rowed in silence for some time, still glaring at the passenger, before he continued. "Then a company comes down to do the work, one of the big London companies. And they made a fine mess of it. So now we've got a new engineer

coming to put things right, and instead of staying at the Royal George in Sandtown he's to stay with us." There was another pause. "A young fellow. A fine swimmer," concluded Trewent.

The passenger in the stern nodded his head. He was looking towards the hotel with that expression in his light-coloured eyes which more than any other characterised his habitual appearance—an expression of profound preoccupation. He was looking towards the hotel, but without interest, scarcely with apprehension.

He was a man just over sixty years of age, corpulent, heavy-shouldered and short-legged. His large, clean-shaven face, from the brow to the chin, was of one uniform tone, a lifeless and yet not an unhealthy pallor. His lips were thin and fastened themselves together in a forbidding compression; the nose was small, well-shaped, but without character; the jaw was heavy and assertive, projecting with visible strain from the curve beneath the ears. In the light-coloured eyes, under the solid brow, there was always that look of intense preoccupation, that look of inattention, abstraction and reverie which we have just noticed. He gave one the impression of a man who looks back as he goes forward, and rather fears the past than expects anything from the future. Yet there was no

haunted look in those cold eyes of his, only an expression of dull, unaltering preoccupation.

"Any other guests?" he asked, without changing the direction of his eyes.

"Not now there isn't."

Trewent continued to row hard, the bows of the boat still pointing up the river. A cormorant flew by, close to the rough water, its legs and neck outstretched, its dark feathers and black eyes shining against the grey of the waves. At that moment a sudden gust of wind blew the broad-brimmed felt hat of the passenger off his head and carried it thirty yards astern before it fell into the river. He was bald.

Trewent stopped rowing for a half-minute, but taking quickly to his oars again, exclaimed, "I daren't go back for it, I daren't do that." The hat, dipping and rising on the waves, was being carried out to sea.

"It doesn't matter," said the passenger; "I've got another in my trunk."

He sat with the snuff-coloured cloak huddled round his neck and drawn tight over his chest, stooping his head to the sharpness of the wind which cut his cheeks and dried his lips. A flicker of sunlight passed across his bald head, and vanished into the greyness of the waning day.

Trewent laughed.

"You want a hat," he said gruffly, "a bald-headed man, like you ! "

He had felt no liking for his passenger when he first cast eyes upon him, standing alone on the bank by his luggage—the Swanscombe cabman having driven away, apparently displeased with his fare, in any case not disposed to remain in conversation with the grim-faced American. But, now on this closer and fuller view, Trewent was conscious of a sharp and fighting antipathy. A feeling of dislike, of antagonism, of vigorous hostility rose in his mind. He looked hard and long at the passenger, despising him, hating him, judging him. "If ever I saw," he thought to himself, "a guilty man, it's this bald-headed Yankee in the stern of my boat."

The peninsula sheltered them from the wind as they drew nearer to the hotel; the passenger raised his head from its stooping position and loosened his cloak.

"You've told them, I suppose, you're coming ? " asked old Trewent, rowing an easier stroke in the smooth water.

"No."

"Well, you ought to have done."

A boy came to the landing-steps and stood look-

ing at the boat. Trewent stopped rowing and turned his head. He put his hand to his mouth and shouted, "Tell the guv'nor a gent's coming to stop."

The boy nodded, took his hands from his pockets, and ran back.

"That's one of my boys," said Trewent. "I've got nine of them altogether, boys and girls. Yes, nine. They take some scratching for, I can tell you."

Only the roof of the hotel was now visible, the bank at this point rising to some height from the water. There was no wind. It felt almost warm after the piercing blast of the open river.

"They'll have to send to the town for food," grumbled Trewent; "you ought to have told them you were coming; it isn't like a regular hotel, you understand; not in winter time, it isn't."

He brought the boat to the steps, which were slimy with a green weed, and standing up held it fast, while the passenger got out. "I'll bring your luggage on in a minute or two," he said, and stepped clumsily out, with the painter in his hand. This old seaman, whose hands shook with a kind of palsy when they were not employed, was like a bear with a sore head.

The passenger felt the loss of his hat when he

reached the top of the steps. The wind struck him sharply across the face, driving a cloud of fine sand into his eyes. He stooped his head, and leaning against the gale, thrust forward to the hotel. At the gateway, where the tamarisks were tossing and writhing in the wind, he passed the boy, whose nailed boots rattled on the pebbles of the drive, and who grinned at his bald head as he passed.

Mrs. Midgley, a little, plump woman with red cheeks and brown hair, her hands clasped 'n front of her, was standing in the doorway to receive him. Before he reached the wooden steps which ascend to the balcony of the hotel, George Midgley had joined his wife. They stood there side by side, prepared to give the visitor a warm and hospitable welcome.

"What a day to use the ferry!" exclaimed Mrs. Midgley. "Why, you must be frozen to death."

"We've got some tea on the way for you," said her husband, who was a big, shaggy-bearded man, more like a farmer than a hotel-keeper. "You'll be glad of that, I reckon." He rubbed his hands together, chuckling. His finger-nails were coarse—dirty.

The visitor raised his head, and the smiles and kindly anxiety of his hosts vanished from their faces. Both of them were conscious of the feeling

which had visited old Trewent in the boat—a feeling of dislike and hostility.

"You're staying the night?" asked Mrs. Midgley.

"I hope to spend some time here," he answered.

"Oh, some time!" she exclaimed, but without pleasure.

"If I find it suits me."

Midgley shut the door, and said to his wife as he passed her, "Number Five would do, wouldn't it?" He went on, and entered his private room, taking up his pipe from the mantelpiece and jerking the still warm ashes into the fire. The wind was driving against the window of this little apartment, and rattling the thin frame. He stood looking down at the fire, pulling at his pipe.

Mrs. Midgley brought the visitors' book to the table in the hall and presented the guest with a pen. There was a dull-red table-cloth on this table with a brass pot holding a palm. Beside it stood a grandfather-clock, whose tic-tac seemed to be ever on the point of stopping. The visitor wrote the name of Hans Reimer in a scrawl that was almost undecipherable, and laid the pen between the leaves of the book, the nib with its blob of ink standing clear of the paper.

"I'll show you your room," said Mrs. Midgley,

and went up the creaking deal stairs before him. Everything was spotlessly clean, but the place was without comfort or refinement. No one could have guessed from the hall the good management and excellent fare of this hotel in the sea.

When Mrs. Midgley came down again she carried the visitors' book to her husband's room. He was still standing in front of the fire.

"I've seen him before," said Mrs. Midgley, "I'm sure of it."

"Ah!" said her husband, "that's just what I was thinking."

She showed him the signature in the book, and they tried to read it. "I wouldn't have that man's face," said Midgley, reaching for a spill, "not for a thousand pounds. What the devil is his name?"

"He's a horrible-looking man," said Mrs. Midgley. "He gives me the creeps. There's something wrong with him, I'm sure. If he stays more than a week I shall go away and leave him to Louisa. It looks to me like Frank Something."

"No, it's an aitch—H, a——"

There was a knock at the door, and Louisa, the one maid kept during the winter, entered the room. Displeasure was evident on her middle-aged face.

"The gentleman says he'll take his tea in the smoking-room."

"What do you think of him, Louisa?" asked Midgley.

"Oh, I think he's horrible," exclaimed the servant; "I don't like him at all; I shouldn't wonder if he isn't a murderer."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Midgley.

"And I'm sure I've seen him before," went on Louisa; "either him or his photograph—I'm sure I have. Oh, it's a dreadful face, I call it!"

"Well, look at that now," said Midgley, "your mistress and I were just saying the same thing. I'm certain I've seen him before—certain."

"Put his tea in the smoking-room," said Mrs. Midgley. "Here we are finding fault with a visitor, when we ought to be thankful for a little money coming in. What if we have seen him before? Plenty of people come and go here without our knowing their names. Ah! there's Trewent with the luggage." She opened the door, and went out, followed by Louisa.

Trewent stood by the boxes with his cap in his hand. Mrs. Midgley went up to him and before telling him the number of the room, looked over the trunk and the valise. She saw the name Hans Reimer.

"He's been over here before," said Trewent. "A Yankee. Came over one day in the summer."

"Ah, I thought I'd seen him before."

"You wouldn't be likely to forget him, I shouldn't think."

"Why not?"

"Well, I didn't."

"Number Five," she said sharply; "knock before you go in."

Trewent dropped his cap on the floor, lifted the trunk on to his shoulders, and taking the valise in his right hand, ascended the stairs ponderously.

Hans Reimer had washed his face and hands in cold water, leaving unused the can of hot water which Louisa had brought him. He was standing in his shirt-sleeves before the window, looking out to sea and drying his fingers with a towel. The panes of this broad window were grimed with salt and sand, so that the waste of ocean appeared utterly sombre and morose. This melancholy aspect was rather heightened, and the depression of the room deepened by the absence of wind on that side of the house. There was a strange silence, and a sensation of choking stuffiness in the room; the fine noise of the sea entered through the closed window muffled and subdued; the vigorous air did not enter at all.

A knock sounded on the door, where the snuff-coloured cloak was hanging, and Hans Reimer

started out of his reverie, turning his head, and calling "Come in." He stood watching.

The door opened, and Trewent was seen in the corridor, crouched under the trunk and stooping down to pick up the valise, which he had dropped in order to rap on the door.

"Can I come in?" he demanded gruffly.

"Yes."

The boatman entered the room, dropped the valise by the chest or drawers, and crossed the room to the bed, setting down the trunk at its foot. Then he straightened his bent back, drew a deep breath and rubbed his hand across his mouth. "Tidy weight, your trunk," he remarked, pulling down his blue jersey.

Hans Reimer placed the towel on the rail of the washstand and approached the boatman, feeling in his pocket for money.

"How much do you charge for the ferry?" he asked.

"Oh, that goes down on the bill. You can give me what you please." His bloodshot eyes watched the coins in the Yankee's palm.

Hans Reimer gave him a shilling, and asked: "Say, is there a card in the hotel giving the services at the church?"

CHAPTER II

IN spite of the surprising fact that Mr. Reimer went to church, even rising early on a saint's day to attend the eight o'clock service, and in spite of the fact that the books which he read so industriously were religious books, the conviction that there was something bad about him, something radically and horribly bad, deepened in the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Midgley and their servants.

No guest could have been more accommodating. He took what was set before him, never complained when meals were late, never gave difficult orders, never sat up wasting lamp-oil in the public rooms, and never rang his bell. But he was more than unpopular. George Midgley could not bear the sight of him coming along the corridor or entering the hotel from the garden. Mrs. Midgley, a talkative, bustling, and sensible woman, felt herself frozen by his approach. Louisa vowed that it was as much as she could do to wait upon him at table. And old Trewent said that he would rather row a drowned corpse across the river than take that

yellow-faced Yankee to the Swanscombe side, shilling or no shilling.

Strangely enough they were all agreed that the man was wicked.

He might go to church, and he might read religious books; but there was something in his face, something in his silence, something in his voice, which told these simple people that he was a soul in the devil's clutches. Nothing could have persuaded them to the contrary. Besides, why did he walk up and down his room at night?—why did he ask for a box of bedroom candles? why did he go those long and solitary walks even when a gale was blowing and the rain came down in stripes?

He had written one letter since his arrival, and he had carried it himself to the post, so that no one in the hotel, manifestly, should know the name of his correspondent. But he had received no letter, and no visitor had come to call upon him. The newspaper was placed at his side on the breakfast table, but he never opened it. Mr. Midgley's dog had run to him on several occasions, jumping up at his legs in a friendly manner, but he had taken no notice of it.

He never bade Louisa good-morning, and never spoke to her during a meal. He passed Mr. Midgley two or three times in the day, but

addressed no word to him. Trewent nodded to him at the landing-stage but he never stopped for a gossip. Children would sometimes stand in his path, but he avoided them and passed without a word or a smile.

One day, when he had been in the hotel a week, Mr. Gumbleton, the curate at St. Matthew's Church in Sandtown, called upon Mrs. Midgley. He said to her, "I suppose you're quite empty now," and when she told him that a visitor was staying in the hotel who attended St. Matthew's Church, he immediately exclaimed, "Not that American?—you don't say that he is staying here?"

It seemed that the curate had been as greatly impressed by this stranger as the Midgleys and their servants. He spoke of Hans Reimer with interest, but it was the interest of dislike and suspicion. "Who is he?" he asked: "I should like to know about him." Mrs. Midgley said, "He'll be in from his walk in a few minutes, you had better call upon him. As for who he is, none of us know; I should be very glad if you could find out something about him, for we're all uneasy here, I can tell you that; though he's a well-behaved visitor, I'm bound to testify, and paid his first week's bill yesterday without a question. He told me he thought about spending the winter here, and though visitors are

scarce at this time of the year, we can't help wishing that he would take himself off."

The curate replied, "He is very devout in church, but I must confess his appearance gives me a feeling of discomfort. I will certainly call upon him, and see what he has to say about himself."

In ten minutes' time Hans Reimer entered the hotel. He went straight to his bedroom, where he washed his hands, and then descended with a book under his arm to the smoking-room. Louisa carried in his tea, and setting down the tray told him that the curate was in the hotel and would like to see him.

Reimer looked up from his book, and said, "Did he ask for me by name?"

Louisa answered, "I can't say, sir. I think he came to see Mrs. Midgley, and she told him you were here."

"Well, show him in."

"Shall I bring a second cup?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

The curate entered the room, and Reimer rose slowly from his chair.

"I've seen you in church," said Gumbleton; "I'm the curate of St. Matthew's."

"Sit down, sir," said Reimer, wheeling a chair to the fire.

The curate was a young man of eight-and-twenty, a decided Churchman, an earnest scholar, and something of a socialist in the religious sense of that somewhat difficult word. His young face, in spite of its freshness, was already marked by study, and there was a look of quiet suffering in his eyes which one could see very clearly came rather from sympathy with the pain of others than from any tragedy of his own.

They talked about the neighbourhood during tea, and afterwards, when Reimer was smoking a cigar and the curate was smoking a pipe, they came gradually to more personal matters.

Louisa had brought in the lamp, drawn the curtains, and made up the fire. The tea-things had been removed, and the two men sat on either side of the hearth, neither looking at the other, their eyes directed to the flames. Gumbleton's first feeling of repugnance had evaporated, but he still found it difficult to be as natural and friendly as he desired to be in conversation with this interesting man who had no doubt travelled all over the world and who was certainly a very devout Christian.

"I hope you like our services at St. Matthew's," he began.

"I like them very well."

"The people are beginning to understand the

meaning, and to appreciate, I think, the value of ritual."

"They seem to be very devout—those who are there."

"But, of course, we must look to the next generation."

"Ah!"

"You are interested in children?"

"I think," replied Reimer, very slowly, "that nothing on God's earth is so important as the religious education of children."

When he had said this, he cleared his throat noisily, pushed his chair back from the heat of the fire, and said in quite a different tone of voice, as though he wanted to get away from serious subjects, "What a lot might be done in a place like this by a business man with a bunch of capital. It seems to me, sir, that your people are asleep. They appear to be crawling through life. The day's too long for them. To-morrow's empty. They've got no way on them, carry no canvas, don't know where they're going. Why, with your facilities Sardtown ought to be a little Chicago."

"Excuse me for asking the question," said the curate, "but have you any thoughts——"

"Me? Oh, no! No, Mr. Gumbleton, I'm—— Well, I'm out of business. I'm not a capitalist,

and I'm an aging man. No, I was only saying how the place strikes me. But what are your own capitalists about? Why don't they see the possibilities lying here right under their eyes, just waiting to be used? It seems to me pitiful that a place like this should be rotting before it's half grown."

"To tell you the truth," replied the curate, "I've no wish to see the place exploited."

"Why not?"

"You spoke about Chicago. I should hate to see anything like Chicago here, if one half of what I've read about Chicago is true. I'm rather suspicious of capitalists, Mr. Reimer. Let me tell you that it's a great relief to me to know that you are not prowling about here with the measuring eyes of an exploiter!"

"Don't like the idea of development?"

"Not development by dividends."

"You can't get anything done without capital, and capital won't walk unless there's a profit."

"Natural growth is one thing; the forcing-house of the exploiting financier is another business altogether. If you could christianise capital, if you could make capital unselfish——"

Reimer's mouth twitched at the corners. He shot the ash from his cigar by striking the forearm of the hand that held it sharply against the palm of

his other hand. He looked down at the glowing end of the cigar, which was turning grey, and said rather impatiently, "It's a mistake for the Church to mix herself up with trade."

"In one sense, of course, you are perfectly——"

"I think, if you'll allow me to interrupt you, that the Church has got her hands full enough as it is. And I'm sorry to say that wherever I go I find clergymen running away from their real business and taking up with things which are not the concern of religion at all. It seems to be the one temptation that clergymen can't resist—to drop the Gospel. I assure you, sir, that in my travels I've met but one or two clergymen who recognised, really recognised, that their only business is the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

As he ceased speaking he looked across at the curate, who had been watching him curiously and listening to him rather impatiently, and added: "What you've got to preach, and what you've got to teach, in season and out of season, from the pulpit and from the easy chair, always and everywhere—always and everywhere—without modification and without concession of any kind, is Repentance; that, and—the forgiveness of sins. Do you, sir, believe in the forgiveness of sins?—really believe in the forgiveness of sins?"

"Certainly."

The American continued to stare at him. "You say that with such conviction," he declared slowly and impressively, "that I'm quite sure you have not thought about the subject. Forgive me, but I'm bound to say that."

The curate, feeling now that he was sitting with some old-fashioned Methodist or Plymouth Brother, began to wish himself out of the room. He said: "Well, the movement with us is away from an outraged and angry Jehovah to a Father of infinite love and compassion. We teach people nowadays not so much to hate sin as to love goodness." He leaned forward to the fireplace, and knocked out the ashes of his pipe. "However, that's a big subject," he said; "and I must be off." He added, looking into the bowl of his pipe, "I've got a boys' class to-night." As he rose to his feet, he smiled rather self-consciously and said, "We must renew our discussion some other day; I hope you'll come and see me."

Reimer took the hand that was offered to him, getting up from his chair at the same time, and said: "Don't forget these words—*provoking most justly Thy wrath and indignation against us*. God forgives sin; but that forgiveness is the biggest fact of the universe."

"Oh, quite so, quite so," said the curate. "Yes, we must never forget that. Well, good-bye. You'll come and see me, won't you?"

"You're very kind, sir; but to be frank with you, I don't seek company. I'm glad to see those who seek me, but I'm too old and too worked-out for the business of paying calls. You understand, I wish to be quiet."

"It must be dull for you sometimes, isn't it?"

"No, sir; I'm never dull."

"You'll be having company in a day or two; Mr. Baverstock, the engineer in charge of the new water supply, is going to stop here."

"I have heard so."

"Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir."

The parish soon learned to regard the American as a Plymouth Brother, and it was settled by a number of people that he was suffering from religious mania. When the gossip reached Mrs. Midgley her anger against Reimer was increased a hundredfold. She said to her husband: "He thinks we're all going to hell; he thinks that he alone will be saved; he's one of those wicked black-hearted Pharisees who make religion a horror. I wish I'd never set eyes on him. He used to frighten me; now he makes me feel sick."

Old Trewent, however, whose dislike of the Yankee increased with every day, maintained that this talk about religion was all hokey-pokey. "Him religious!" he exclaimed to Louisa; "why, that's only his way of deceiving people. You wait a bit. Something will come out about that fellow. You'll see then how religious he is!"

A day or two after the curate's call, Hans Reimer returned from his afternoon walk to find the hall of the hotel noisy and cheerful. A young man in the kit of a motor-cyclist, his garments smothered in mud, his face red with rain and wind, was standing between Mr. and Mrs. Midgley, a glass of whisky in his hand. This young man, who was tall and fair, and who had a singularly pleasant voice, was recounting his adventures on the road. The faces of Mr. and Mrs. Midgley were bright with smiles. Louisa, arriving with a cloth to wipe the traveller down, was smiling too. Mr. Midgley's dog was rolling on its back and uttering its pleasure in a number of growls.

The traveller turned his head at the sound of the opening door, and glanced at Reimer. But he did not cease to speak and laugh, nor did the Midgleys stop smiling. When Reimer drew level with the little group, taking off his snuff-coloured cloak, there was a burst of laughter, and Louisa laughed

too, for this particular adventure had a joke at the end.

As Reimer passed on to the staircase, Mrs. Midgley touched the young traveller on the arm, nodded her head towards Reimer, and made a grimace.

The new-comer questioned her with a look.

"A Plymouth Brother, American variety," she whispered; "goes about all day with a face like a funeral!"

"Good Lord!" laughed the traveller. "What an old fool!"

And he drank up his whisky.

CHAPTER III

MR. BAVERSTOCK ignored Hans Reimer, and used the hotel as if he were the only guest. He whistled as he ran up the stairs. He sang as he dressed. He shouted for Louisa over the banisters and chaffed her in the coffee-room. He played extremely noisy games with Mr. Midgley's dog.

He was a young man of four-and-twenty. In his clear and shining complexion, in his clean and vigorous eyes, in the quickness of his actions, and in the splendid symmetry of his body, it was easy to see that he lived a life of healthful virtue, not fighting against sins of the flesh, but so absorbed in the joys and excitements of manful pleasure that he really overlooked the dissipations of vice.

He was red-faced, with thick, sand-coloured hair and blue eyes. The face was small and fine-boned, the features were delicate and regular. One of his pleasantest possessions were his teeth, which were beautifully shaped and of an excellent colour. When he laughed one noticed his teeth and envied him all that they stood for—perfect health, joy in life, a clean past, and a pure ancestry.

Every morning, in spite of the cold weather, he descended to the garden in a dressing-gown and sand-shoes, with a bath-towel round his shoulders, and bathed in the sea. He took his breakfast before Reimer was down, and after he had smoked a pipe, jumped on his motor-cycle, which Trewent held ready for him at the gate, and rode away to his work. He returned for luncheon at one, and was off again before two o'clock. Sometimes he came back to the hotel for tea, but as a rule it was quite dark when he arrived, an hour before dinner. His first Sunday was spent in sailing, and he returned with a catch of fish which delighted Mrs. Midgley.

Now and then he addressed a remark to Reimer, but he made no effort towards acquaintance. The two men dined together at the same table, but Baverstock read a novel during his meals, and spoke more to Louisa than to his fellow-guest. He did not feel the same repugnance for the American as the others, but he disliked him for his puffy, flabby, melancholy face, and was disposed to despise him for his religious mania, of which he had heard from Mrs. Midgley.

One night in the smoking-room, however, the American spoke of the neighbourhood as he had spoken of it to the curate, from the point of view

of a financier. The engineer was interested. They sat talking till ten o'clock, and parted on quite good terms.

"Plymouth Brother!" said young Baverstock to Mrs. Midgley next morning. "He's no Plymouth Brother. He's one of the 'cutest business men living. Keep your eyes on him and you'll find one day that he has bought up the town and the Spit. You'd better make up to him. Take a tip from me, Mrs. Midgley."

When he returned that evening Mrs. Midgley said to him, "I've got a piece of news that will please you."

"Herr Feimer has made me his heir?"

"Bah, you wouldn't touch a penny of his dirty money, would you?"

"Oh, wouldn't I just! Give me half a chance."

"My news is better than that."

"Well, what is it?"

"Two ladies are coming to stop here."

"Good! Good! Very good! How old are they, what are their names, and are they beautiful?"

"Oh, you must wait."

"But *ladies* is a vague term. Suppose if they are two old maiden aunts! Suppose if they are two disfigured British matrons!"

"One of the two is young. At least I think so."

"Only think so. Come, that's not very promising."

"Well, she's the niece of the other."

"Aha, a niece; I spy a niece; good, a niece; I like a niece. When does she come, and what is her name?"

"The aunt is Miss Roach: Emily Roach she signs herself."

"Humph."

"The niece is Miss Marston."

"That sounds better. Her Christian name?"

"It's not given."

"How would Violet do? Violet Marston. That sounds rather delicious, don't you think?"

At this moment Reimer came down the stairs, with the habitual book under his arm.

"Have you heard the news, Mr. Reimer?" asked Baverstock. "Some ladies are coming to stop here. We shall have to behave ourselves. We ought also to put on our best bibs and tuckers. When do they arrive, Mrs. Midgley?"

"On Friday."

"Three days to wait. What a torture!"

"Oh, go along with you, Mr. Baverstock. What a one you are for your joke."

Reimer entered the smoking-room and closed the door.

Baverstock ran up the stairs to dress for dinner. From the landing above he called down to Mrs. Midgley. "Mrs. Midgley!—Mrs. Midgley!"

She came to the foot of the stairs, and inquired what she could do for him.

"What do you think of Angela?" he asked.

"Angela? Who's she? What do you mean, Mr. Baverstock? I don't understand you."

"Angela Marston, instead of Violet. Oh, Angela, sweet Angela! My thoughts are all of thee!"

"Go along with you, Mr. Baverstock."

"Thy footstep haunts my rood of earth, thy voice my league of sea."

"You make me laugh. I never knew such a man."

"Well, I'm sure it's Angela," said the young man, and went off to his bedroom singing, "Oh, Angela, sweet Angela! My thoughts are all of thee."

That night he was particularly cheerful at dinner, and not only teased Louisa with a good deal of spirit, but ventured to rally Mr. Reimer on the subject of the ladies who were coming to stay in the hotel.

In the smoking-room, when he had lighted his pipe, he opened a book and settled down to read,

his feet resting against the side of the mantelpiece. On the opposite side of the hearth Hans Reimer, seated in a low arm-chair, with spectacles on nose, opened his book and read for some minutes in silence, smoking a cigar.

Louisa came in with the coffee and withdrew. Neither of the men spoke. The sipping of the coffee, the sucking noise as they smoked, and the sudden rustle of a turned page, were the only sounds in the room.

Presently Reimer lowered his book, placed it on his lap, and drew off his spectacles.

"I should be afraid," he said, "if I were a man like you."

Without lowering his book, Baverstock turned his head and looked at the American. He was frowning.

"What?" he asked. "I didn't hear what you said."

"I was thinking that if I were you, I should be afraid."

"Afraid! What about?"

"You're one of those men of whom everybody speaks well. You're popular. You're liked. What does that mean?"

Baverstock took his feet from the mantelpiece, laughed, and leaned slightly forward to the

American. "Good Lord," he exclaimed, "you aren't going to talk about religion, are you?"

"I suppose you never give religion a thought?" asked Reimer.

"I can't say I do."

"Ah!"

"I'm too busy, for one thing: too happy, for another: and too jolly ignorant for a third."

"Your sins don't trouble you, then?"

Baverstock laughed. "I say, you aren't going to try and convert me, are you?"

"Nothing of that. I'm just interested. You see, Mr. Baverstock—I was once a man who never gave religion a thought."

"It seems to me, if you'll allow me to say so, that you'd be a sight happier if you went back to that former condition."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"My sins won't let me."

Baverstock did not turn his head, though the words and the way they were said startled him. He took his pipe from his mouth and running the vulcanite up and down his lips, said slowly, looking into the fire—

"That's one of the things about religious people I can't understand. They say they believe in a

God of love—a kind of glorified Father. But they're always on their knees before Him, imploring Him for mercy! Well, that's absurd. If they said God is a tyrant I could understand litanies and confessions and cringings and bowings and all the rest of it; but if they say He's absolute Love, why whine, why creep? I don't understand it."

"Love is *one* of God's attributes. Another, Mr. Baverstock, is justice."

"Well, I'm not afraid of absolute justice, are you? Think what we are! We don't get a fair start in life, to begin with: we come here, willy-nilly, and ready-made without knowing what it's all about; and it's not easy to earn daily bread, and we're not built to stand much knocking about, physical or mental. Hell's a perfectly outrageous punishment for anything such creatures as we could possibly do in a whole lifetime."

"You think that?"

"I'm jolly sure of it."

"So you don't bother about the next world?"

"Not a scrap."

"Are you to be envied or pitied?"

"I don't know, and I don't care."

"Well, perhaps you'll change your mind."

"That's always possible. But, look here, tell me honestly: do you mean to say that anything a man

can do in the way of wickedness merits eternal punishment?"

"What did Christ mean by the millstone?"

"I don't know."

"He teaches that there are sins which cannot be forgiven."

"Well, I don't know Greek, I don't know Hebrew, I don't know Aramaic, and I haven't got the time to find out what all the Doctors of Divinity say about these things; so I don't go back to the past to find out what I am to think. I take the thoughts which are natural to me. I believe in what seems to me sensible and true. Whether there's a life after death, I don't know, I can't say. It's quite possible that there is some sort of life after death; but it must in the nature of things be so different from this flesh and blood life of our atmosphere—and God hasn't made it in the least clear and certain that there's any such life at all—that I conclude we aren't to bother about it, that we can't possibly understand it, and that we're meant to do our work here as well as we can and leave the rest, if there is a rest, to the Origin of things if there is an Origin who cares about us."

There was silence for a moment. Then Reimer said in a deliberate manner, speaking very slowly and quietly—

"You've seen harlots on the street, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been with one of those women?"

"Good God, no! What a horrible idea."

"You think it horrible?"

Baverstock looked at him. "Why, of course it is. It's a perfectly filthy and loathsome idea."

The old man nodded his head slowly and said—

"Suppose you had been with one of those women, and afterwards came to feel about it as you feel about it now: wouldn't you repent, wouldn't you pray God to forgive you?"

Baverstock shifted in his chair with annoyance. Rather contemptuously he said—

"I can't imagine myself to have done anything so unnatural and disgusting." The subject gave him a feeling of nausea.

Reimer, looking into the fire, and tapping with the tips of his fingers on the book in his lap, said doggedly and decidedly—

"Men press those women into ruin of body and soul: don't you think they ought to repent?"

"I think they ought to shoot themselves."

"Men commit other sins," said the older man; "they lie, they cheat: they forge, they embezzle: they grind the faces of the poor: they lynch negroes, they brutalise heathen nations, they

commit murder; don't you think *they* ought to repent?"

"A man may be an infernal blackguard——"

"Stop a minute. Suppose a man has committed those sins, and afterwards repents. What can he do? He may repent himself, he may never commit those sins again; but his victims, diseased and dead, cut off in the midst of their sins—what about them?"

"Good Lord, I don't care to think about those things."

"I am bringing you, Mr. Baverstock, to see the need, the absolute need, of a Saviour and a Redeemer. You are young, you are pure, you are innocent. You can't understand the place of Christ in human history. Only a man broken at the bottom of the pit of iniquity can understand that. But I tell you, and I know the world, this earth would be a madhouse but for the Atonement. One thing saves the world, and one alone—it is the knowledge, through Christ, of the forgiveness of sins."

Baverstock leaned forward and knocked his pipe on the topmost bar of the grate, slowly and thoughtfully. "I've no doubt there's something in what you say," he replied, sitting back and looking into the empty bowl, putting his finger in it and twist-

ing it round; "but I know this, that religious people are all at sixes and sevens as to what they believe; and so, as I am a busy man and like life a great deal too well to muddle it, I don't intend to let the theologians get hold of me. Take my tip, Mr. Reimer—if you don't mind taking advice from a youngster: life loses its zest directly a man bothers his head with anything that is not susceptible of proof. We've got quite enough to do here, putting things straight, and finding out the secrets of nature. You leave God to look after the next step. Do your job here, and do it as well as you can. Instead of worrying your brain about hell, why not take hold of Sandtown and develop it? That's a man's job. If I were you, I should get to work. Words are plaguy things if they don't fit into action."

He rose from his chair, shaking down his trousers. He was smiling, very well pleased with the way he had spoken, and yet rather shy at finding himself in a religious conversation. He did not look at Hans Reimer, who was watching him eagerly.

"Well," he said, "I fancy it's time to go bedward. One of the wisest things a man can do is to keep fit. Why don't you come for a swim with me before breakfast?"

He glanced at Reimer as he asked the question, still smiling.

"I'm too old for that, sir," replied the American, "and too old also for your pagan philosophy."

"Perhaps we'd better avoid religion in future," laughed Baverstock, "in case we quarrel. Religion makes more enemies than anything else. Fortunately there are other things to think about. And we shall have ladies here soon. They'll want amusing. Well, good-night."

He went upstairs neither whistling nor singing.

CHAPTER IV

IN his bedroom he said to himself, "That old fellow has got religion on the brain. No mistake about that. Trewent is wrong. I'll stake my life he's no hypocrite."

For a few minutes, flinging off his garments as he walked about the room which Louisa vainly and affectionately tried to keep tidy, he thought about sin, and forgiveness of sin, and the mystery of this human existence; that thought of something haunting and underlying appearance which occurs to us at long intervals, and then so elusively that only a trained attention can seize it. Before he was undressed, however, this question was out of his mind and he was concerned with another.

"Who," he asked himself, "is this queer old Yankee, and what is he doing here, alone in an outlandish hotel on the English coast?"

The fact that Reimer manifestly suffered from religion on the brain did not answer this question.

Suddenly it occurred to young Baverstock that one of the strange puzzles of life is to be found in

those affinities and antipathies which mark the relations of one human being with another.

He said to himself, "Why is it that some men, directly we see them, inspire us with a feeling of dislike—before they have spoken, before we know anything about them? Why is it, on the other hand, that we are immediately drawn to some people, and know at once that we shall like them exceedingly, perfect strangers though they are?"

And then he began to think of old Reimer's atmosphere of mystery which so unpleasantly affected everybody who came into the least contact with him. Trewent thought he was a rogue who used religion as a cloak. Louisa still felt that he had committed a murder. The Midgleys wished him out of their hotel, feeling that there was something evil about him.

As for Baverstock himself, while he had none of these rather violent feelings, still he knew very well that between him and Reimer there was a barrier of personality which prevented friendship. He could never be perfectly at his ease with the old man. He could never like him. Certainly there was a mystery about this American which rendered him unpleasant and slightly suspicious to the frank mind of the engineer.

But before he was in bed he found himself sing-

ing, "Oh, Angela, sweet Angela! My thoughts are all of thee." He laughed, bustled speculation about old Reimer out of his head, and, going to the open window on bare feet, looked out to sea.

The night was moonless and profoundly dark. A few stars, shining with a yellowish light, could be seen at vast distances in a sky that was as black as velvet. The unrest of the violet sea was dimly discernible, and in the light from his window he could see the swaying of tamarisk bushes and the frothing wash of the waves over flattened rocks at the base of the wall.

As he looked, with the cold wind in his face, the thud of the ocean in his ears, he saw the lantern of a fishing-boat rising and falling in the midst of the sea. "That's a Brixham trawler," he said, "a little twenty-five ton Mumblebee." He watched it, thinking of the men on board, and picturing the decks, the stuffy cabin, and the odorous hold, feeling that those men lived a brave and natural life. He fancied himself pulling hand over hand at the wet black fishing net, which, as it came up dripping from the sea, shimmered and quivered with the silver flashes of the catch. They would sail with the dawn into the harbour at Baskerton, smoking their pipes and shouting across the smooth water to friends in other boats. He could fancy

himself lying with his back against the side, his legs extended across the deck, his hand stretched out and holding the tiller, which pulled against him and creaked grindingly in the rudder-chocks.

His father, Colonel Vincent St. Aubyn Baverstock, who was the captain of a troop in Egypt, colonel of his regiment in South Africa, had married the daughter of an impoverished Irish earl, and now lived on his estate in Shropshire—a place of some three thousand acres. He was a tall, handsome, grey-headed man, with a lean face and a body that was strung like a bow-string. Not very intelligent, he was nevertheless a clever sportsman, a good landlord, and a capable managing householder. He had placed two of his sons in the Army, one in the Navy, a fourth in the Egyptian service, and Harry—the favourite of his mother—had been allowed to follow his bent and become an engineer. Colonel Baverstock, who had won the D.S.O. in South Africa, was never so happy as when these sons came home and surrounded his table and filled the house with their gun-cases, fishing-rods, golf-clubs and racquets. All the same he was continually at them about their bad habits, reading them little lectures on tidiness while he himself put their litter straight.

Lady Mary Baverstock might have been a

happier woman if a daughter had come to her—a daughter whom she would certainly have trained to be affectionate and considerate. No one could have been sweeter and gentler and more kindly than this little red-haired woman, whose blue eyes had never known the clouds of passion; but, somehow or another, this sweetness and gentleness missed fire, it was ineffectual, it attracted but did not hold; one wanted to like Lady Mary very much, but found oneself making conversation and disposed to yawns. She read a great many books, some of them books which should have enlightened her mind and given her a current of fresh ideas, but she was always the same woman—pleasant enough, never unkind or blatant, but very uninteresting. She wrote letters to her sons by every mail, never missing, and this was her chief business in life, but her sons found the letters dull and inept: they were always the same, these long, perfectly legible and neat letters which never told the young men what they wanted to know.

She seemed rather proud, although it may have been a pose, that she was stupid in housekeeping. "My husband does everything," she would say; "he writes out the orders, interviews the housekeeper, goes over the store-cupboard, and sees that the servants do their duty."

Colonel Baverstock always made and poured out the afternoon tea. He had one or two fads, and was a masterful, fidgety man, easily irritated by little blunders. Sometimes he spoke rather sharply to his wife, as though to rouse her; but when she smiled and answered him gently, he would glance at her with real kindness in his grey eyes, laughing with amusement, and sometimes he would get up and kiss her, calling her his "dear little fool." They were both rather stupid in different ways, but they were good, and their children owed them a very considerable debt on account of this goodness. What a fine, handsome, healthy set of men they were!

Harry Baverstock was earning £240 a year. He lived in lodgings in Greenwich, on the best of terms with his hosts, who were working people. His father made him an allowance of £60. Occasionally Lady Mary sent him a cheque for £5, thinking that he could not have enough to eat. His balance at the bank crept slowly towards £300, in spite of his expenditure in motor-cycling. His chief ambition was to buy a car.

He had distinguished himself with his firm—who were niggardly employers—by the manner in which he had put in a water-supply for a sea-coast town in Norfolk. He knew that he could right the

mistake which had been made in Sandtown, and he hoped that his employers would mark their appreciation of this service by a substantial rise in his salary. If not—well, he was dreaming of South America.

He fell asleep that night thinking of his future. He was fond of his work, but he thought a good deal about money.

On the following morning, as he took his cycle from Trewent, he said to the old man, "You mustn't misjudge the Yankee, Trewent; he's a proper parson of a fellow."

"Damn his soul to hell," shouted old Trewent; "if the likes of him go to heaven, blowed if I don't ask to 'bide outside."

Baverstock laughed. "Heaven's a big place," he said; "there'll be room for both of you."

"Mark my words," answered the boatman, "that Yankee's a guilty man. You'll see the detectives from London down here if you stay long enough. I know a blackguard, Mr. Baverstock, when I see him."

It was quite hopeless to remove the prejudice of this old seaman, whose cracked and wrinkled face, with its bloodshot eyes and sullen mouth, wore the expression of an habitual scowl, as though he disapproved of life and suspected the universe.

One day, returning from his work at five o'clock Harry Baverstock found an elderly lady in the hall of the hotel talking to Mrs. Midgley. She was a small, grey-haired, masculine woman, with great distinction in her face and considerable energy in her manner. She spoke slowly, firmly, forcefully. Her hair, which was cut short, was parted down the centre and brushed on either side of her fine-shaped head. Her face was deeply lined, like a man's. She leaned upon a stout walking-stick made of ash.

She turned her head as Baverstock entered the hall, glanced at him sharply, and then renewed her conversation with Mrs. Midgley. But Mrs. Midgley, whose face always brightened at sight of Harry, put her off, and saying, "Excuse me a minute, please," went to the table for Harry's letters and then stepped forward to give them to him. "You'd like some tea?" she inquired. "You're not going out again?"

"No," he answered, "I'm not going out again. How's Angela?"

"Mr. Baverstock! Really!"

"Quite well I hope?"

"Oh, yes, very well indeed; of course she is. I'll send your tea to the smoking-room." Then, turning to the old lady, her ruddy face smiling

and cheerful, she said, "This is Mr. Baverstock, one of our visitors."

It was an introduction!

The old lady looked at Baverstock, smiled, and gave him something of a nod.

Mrs. Midgley said, "Miss Roach has just arrived from London."

Baverstock, who was opening one of his letters, addressed a remark to the old lady about the journey, inquiring whether she had come by car or train.

"By train," she answered.

"It is quicker, of course, by train," he said, pulling a letter out of its envelope, "but it's a hopping trip by road; however, any journey's worth while that brings one to a place like this."

"Come, I'm glad to hear you say that. You like it, then?"

He looked up. "This place? I should think so! I call it the jolliest place in England, and Mrs. Midgley feeds us like game-cocks; don't you, Mrs. Midgley?"

When he had gone into the smoking-room, Mrs. Midgley whispered into the ear of Miss Roach, "His mother is Lady Mary Baverstock. He's an engineer himself, but quite one of the aristocracy all the same."

"Indeed," said the old lady, and hobbled towards the stairs on her walking-stick.

Harry was taking off his motor garments waiting for tea, when Mrs. Midgley entered the room. He was seated in a low arm-chair beside the fire, his letters lying on the floor at his feet. He looked up, as he unfastened his long leggings, and said, "Well, what is she like?"

"Another mystery!" exclaimed the good woman, making an elaborate bow and spreading her hands. She was dressed in her best black satin dress, with a large gold brooch at the neck. It was easy to see that she was very well pleased with herself.

"What do you mean?"

"The niece. Your Angela. Oh, I say, fancy you daring to ask about her before the old lady!"

"Is her name Angela?"

"No."

"What is it?"

"But she's a mystery; my word, she is! I don't believe she's a Russian Princess travelling incognito. Beautiful—I never saw such a beautiful creature in my life. Honour bright! I'm not joking. I'm not really. You'll fall head over ears in love with her; you see if you don't. Eyes! My dear sir, they're *enormous*; black, too, with great, sweeping lashes. And a complexion just as if it were

painted. I'm not exaggerating. She's like some exquisite doll. But, Mr. Baverstock"—here she lowered her voice, and stooped forward—"Proud!—why she just withers you with a look."

"Is she really pretty?"

"Wait till you see her."

"Tall?"

"Tall, slim, graceful, but as arrogant, as cold, as scornful as a statue."

"This promises to be exciting, Mrs. Midgley."

"George said she gave him the queerest feeling he ever had in his life. He said something pleasant to her when she arrived, and she just gave him a look that made him go stone cold. She made me feel as if I were a baby in a Sunday School. Lovely—there's no question about that; but—proud, why, she looks as if all the rest of us were so much dirt under her feet."

Baverstock got out of his leggings, and stood up. "I should rather like to see her," he said; "you make me curious, Mrs. Midgley. Where is she just now?"

Mrs. Midgley answered as she went to the door, "Oh, you won't see her before dinner, and perhaps not then. They're taking tea in their bedroom, and Miss Marston is lying down. The old lady told me that she is very delicate and has felt the

journey and must be kept very quiet. Perhaps it's a mercy she should not see that old Reimer on her first day. How I wish the brute would go!"

"Oh, she's an invalid, then?"

"Miss Roach says so; but it looks to me as if she's only suffering from one thing, and that is pride."

As she went out of the room, Harry stooped down and picked up his letters. His chaffing interest in the girl was gone. "An invalid," he thought; "probably a neurotic." He wondered how long it would be before Louisa brought him his tea.

The door opened and Mrs. Midgley re-appeared carrying a letter in her hand.

"I forgot to show you this," she said in a low voice, glancing over her shoulder at the door, which she had left open; "it came this afternoon."

He took the letter and glanced at the name on the envelope. It was addressed to Hans Reimer, and had come from America.

"It's the first he has received," she said mysteriously.

He handed it back. "Well," he said, "I don't see very much in that."

"And the handwriting is disguised, I'm sure of it."

"No, Mrs. Midgley, you're wrong there. Look

at it again. It's a child's handwriting. Old Hans Reimer is not the mystery you all try to make him out to be. He's a rich old stick with a religious bee in his bonnet and a bad spot somewhere in his liver. I say, when's my tea coming? I'm exhausted."

He sat down again in the low arm-chair and thrust out his legs, his feet in the fender.

CHAPTER V

ON the following day Baverstock saw Lucilia Marston when he returned for luncheon. She was sitting in a deck-chair on the balcony at the side of the hotel, close to the front door. This side of the hotel gave one a dispiriting view of the surroundings, for one looked over the shingle drive only to a blistered gateway and a hedge of ragged tamarisks, with but a narrow and difficult glimpse of the wide river through the gateway to suggest a world beyond. However on this particular morning, which was blustering though bright, it was possible to escape the wind on this side of the hotel and to feel something of the warmth of the sun.

Miss Roach was reading aloud from a book, seated in an upright chair, with her back to the drive and her face to Lucilia. As he stopped his cycle at the gateway and put his foot to the ground, Baverstock caught sight of Miss Roach's grey head; as he pushed his bicycle over the shingle he noticed that the niece was also on the balcony, but was quite unable to see her face.

She was sitting with her hands in her lap, looking through the crosswork of the balcony towards the river. Her feet rested on a stool. She was wearing a cream-silk blouse, a skirt of dove-coloured cloth, and a thick knitted jacket of Saxe blue with pockets at the corners. A pair of loose-fitting wash-leather gloves covered her hands. Her shoes and stockings were grey. Across her lap lay a scarf of the same blue as her woollen jacket, which she had worn in the garden over her hair.

As he rested his bicycle against the balcony, Harry Baverstock looked up and saw Lucilia's face for the first time. She was looking at him with a frown of disapproval in her dark eyes. He thought she was a very pretty and graceful-looking girl.

Miss Roach wished him good-morning when he arrived on the balcony, and asked him with a smile in her grey eyes when the wind was likely to drop? He noticed that Lucilia did not even glance in his direction. She was looking straight at her aunt.

"Don't you like the wind?" he asked Miss Roach from the door.

"I can't say I do. No. I call it a beast of a wind."

"We shall have rain if it drops," he answered, "and that's worse; at least I think so."

"Well, I don't know," she said, and lifted her book to go on with her reading.

He turned the handle of the door and entered the hotel.

What seemed to him the churlishness of Lucilia did not pique him in the least; he thought it was stupid of her to be so affected and stuck up. He considered that girls put on airs to tickle curiosity, and that sort of thing, while it was too trivial for contempt, annoyed him on account of its silliness. He liked people to be natural.

He was seated at his table in the coffee-room before the ladies came in for luncheon. They walked past him to a little table in the bay window, Miss Roach ahead, hobbling slowly on her stick, Lucilia following close behind her, with the awkwardness of hampered steps, but upright and dignified. Baverstock was scanning the menu, and did not look up.

"Shut that window, please," Miss Roach said to Louisa, nodding her head in the direction of the window behind Lucilia's chair.

Baverstock raised his head, threw the menu down, and glanced across the room. The profile of Lucilia was clearly visible, with Louisa's black dress for background. It seemed to him that she really was, as Mrs. Midgley had asserted, an exceptionally beautiful girl.

Miss Roach was studying the menu, frowning at

the bad writing; Lucilia's handsome black eyes were watching her aunt without expression of any kind.

She wore her dark hair close to the back of her head, and swathed high up on to the crown. A straight fringe reached quite to her eyebrows, which were very thin, dark and beautifully arched. This fringe gave her rather a coquettish look. Her black eyes, with their long lashes, seemed over-big in the small childlike face, with its pink and white complexion, its small nose, and its abrupt mouth of vivid carmine. The chin, although it was small, had the roundness and softness of beauty, and the line to the long neck sloped gently with a sense of fullness.

Baverstock could not deny, the longer he looked, that she was beautiful; but without prejudice of any kind in his mind he decided that something was lacking in her face. He tried to think what it was. "It isn't a soul that's lacking," he thought, "for I should say she could be a perfect devil if she wanted to; but whatever it is, it spoils her; she's not natural, something's amiss."

Louisa took their order, given by Miss Roach, and came waddling towards Baverstock, smiling and blushing, her shoes squeaking over the deal floor, her stiff apron rustling as she advanced.

Fresh people always made this excellent serving-woman nervous and self-conscious.

He asked her where Mr. Reimer was, and she replied that he had gone to Baskerton for the day, adding in a low voice, "A good job too: I hope they'll keep him." He told her what he would have for luncheon, and as she inquired about the question of vegetables, which he always forgot, he started suddenly, and looked towards the table in the window.

Lucilia was speaking.

Her voice did more than please him: it interested him, deeply.

"Whatever she is," he thought to himself, "she's real. That's the voice of a genuine creature." He turned to Louisa, who was still smiling, and answered her question.

Lucilia's voice was low and musical but without weakness. She spoke slowly, but there was no suggestion of a drawl. It was the voice of a mind neither tired nor affected. The note of slight scorn that sounded in it was authentic. She might be arrogant and proud, but if so arrogance and pride were a veritable part of her nature. Qualities of this order in a girl so young struck Baverstock as unusual. He felt profoundly interested in this niece. Why should she be arrogant, why should

a mere child, so free from self-consciousness, apparently so unaware of her beauty, be proud?

He watched her throughout luncheon, grateful for the absence of Reimer. He scarcely exchanged two words with Louisa, not because she was extra busy, but because he was quite absorbed in this beautiful young girl. Louisa reported to Mrs. Midgley, before that lady appeared in her black satin dress to carve the cold dishes on the side table, that Mr. Baverstock was fairly in love already. Baverstock would have been very much surprised and startled if he had heard this report, for he was unaware of any feeling save one of interest.

At the conclusion of his luncheon, he purposely waited at the table, pretending to be eating water-biscuits, bits of which he buttered and unbuttered several times, looking at Lucilia. He hoped that Miss Roach would speak to him as she passed.

The ladies rose. Lucilia went to the left side of her aunt, the side farthest away from Baverstock, and timed her paces to those of the older lady, whose stick thudded on the floor as she advanced. Lucilia had placed her right hand through the arm of Miss Roach, in the other hand she carried her knitted jacket and scarf, which dragged on the floor.

Miss Roach glanced with a pleasant smile at

Baverstock, but did not speak. Lucilia passed him without a look.

When he followed them into the hall he found that they were not there. He opened the door and went on to the balcony, but with equally bad fortune. He stood there for a few moments filling his pipe. Then he returned, entered the smoking-room, leaving the door wide open, and lighted his pipe. Ten minutes passed, and the ladies did not make their appearance.

He put on his cycling garments, and went out to his machine feeling that life was unnecessarily vexatious. "Miss Roach is right," he said to himself, "it is a beast of a wind."

Trewent appeared at the gateway, his cap on one side, his thick blue jersey rucked up round his waist, the lace of one of his boots hanging loose in the sand. He had been dozing, and looked like some old dog that had just crawled from a warm kennel.

"Going out?" he asked. "I saw you'd left the bike at the door, so I didn't put it away."

Baverstock stopped, scratched his head, and then laughed. "I'd clean forgotten," he said. "Of course, it's Saturday."

The old boatman laughed gruffly. "You'd forgot it was Saturday!" he said. "Well, I hadn't. I

never forget wages day." Then, coming forward, he added, "What about a sail? There's a fine breeze and the tide's right."

Baverstock was thinking to himself, "What has happened to me that I should forget it is Saturday?" He pushed his bicycle forward, and handed it over to Trewent. "You might put it away," he said, "I'll let you know about a sail presently." It occurred to him that he might possibly see Lucilia if he went indoors and sat in the smoking-room with the door open.

He turned back, and was mounting the wooden steps to the balcony when the door opened and Miss Roach came out, followed closely by Lucilia, who frowned at sight of him, and looked away.

"Well, the wind's not quite so boisterous," said the old lady, glancing up at the sky.

Baverstock found that he was studiously preventing himself from looking at Lucilia. He purposely kept his eyes on Miss Roach.

"Would you like to go for a sail?" he asked. "I was thinking of going out. It's a fine wind, and the river isn't the least rough."

Lucilia drew closer to her aunt, and touched her hand.

"Go for a sail!" exclaimed Miss Roach, smiling. "You're very kind. Well, I'm not sure."

"You'd enjoy the river."

"Should I?"

"The boat's quite comfortable; it's a half-decker and solid as a tub; I'd get some cushions from the hotel."

Lucilia was pressing closer to her aunt's side, her face averted from Baverstock. Miss Roach looked up at her, smiling. "What do you think?" she asked.

"I'd rather go for a walk."

Baverstock said quickly, "You wouldn't enjoy walking on the Spit to-day; the wind's blowing clean across it."

"I believe a sail would do you good, Lucilia," said Miss Roach.

It was the first time Baverstock had heard her name. He thought to himself, "That suits her exactly; no name would do as well."

The girl said she would go if her aunt wished it.

"Well, on the whole," said Miss Roach cheerfully, "I do wish it." She turned, looked at Baverstock with a frank smile, and said, "You'll take a boatman, won't you?"

"We'll have old Trewent with us," he said.

"I'm rather nervous, you understand!"

"There's no danger, I assure you."

At that moment the sun came out through the drifting clouds and brightened the whole scene.

CHAPTER VI

THE sea looked so cheerful and challenging with the sun joining in its dance, that old Miss Roach, as soon as she was comfortably seated in the stern, with Lucilia close beside her on the starboard side, suggested to Baverstock that they should just "poke their noses" out there for a quarter of an hour before sailing up the river.

Baverstock was seated in the stern on the port side, holding the short tiller in his right hand. Midøley's dog, who always accompanied him, was squatting at his side. He laughed cheerfully at Miss Roach's suggestion, and called out to Trewent—who was sitting amidships with his back to the company, one of his old gnarled hands on the mast—that he intended going seawards. The boat was gliding away from the landing steps under her jib.

Trewent stood up, and began to unlace the main-sail. "It won't do to stay out too long," he said; "the wind's turning a bit womanish."

"What does he mean by that?" asked Miss

Roach, straightening her back and smiling with a good-natured contempt for ignorant prejudice.

"He means that the wind is rather inclined to chop and change."

"And that's womanish, is it? Well, perhaps he thinks so."

Baverstock laughed. "He's a regular character, old Trewent," he said, indulgently; then lowering his voice, "His wife leads him a dog's life at home, poor old chap."

"Silly old fool!" corrected Miss Roach.

The mainsail went up with a pleasant clattering rattle of the mast-rings, shivering and flapping with a great deal of spirit. Baverstock, taking the sheet in his left hand, told Trewent to get in the jib. He was too busy with his ship to look at Lucilia, but he was repeating her name to himself, and liking it a great deal.

The sail filled sharply; the boat went quickly forward with a bubbling sound of parted water at her bows; in two moments she was lifting and falling, splashing and checking in the midst of the waves.

"This is quite exciting," said Miss Roach.

The sky was pearl-coloured at the horizon, with white clouds and spaces of bright blue overhead. The sea was a shifting, swinging patchwork of

green, slate, and white, with steadier stretches of purple close to the shore. It was a good, hearty, buffeting wind, but with no enmity in it, no sound of menace or threat : and the sun was really shining.

"It couldn't be a better day," said Baverstock.

He was hatless, and had the sleeves of his Norfolk jacket turned back over the wrists; his flannel trousers, which were stained and loose-fitting, were turned up at the ends over a pair of old canvas shoes and socks which hung down over the ankles. Midgley's dog was rubbing a number of white hairs into the left side of his jacket.

"Had I better take in a reef?" asked old Trewent over his shoulder.

"Not yet."

Lucilia was looking over the starboard side, across the glittering plunge of the waves to the dim trees and misty hills of Swanscombe, seven miles away. Her eyes never glanced towards Baverstock.

She was wrapped up in a thick double-breasted ulster the colour of silver-sand, with the scarf of Saxe blue over her head and tied under her chin. Her face seemed smaller and more doll-like than before. Baverstock could not make up his mind whether he liked the straight fringe; it gave her, he thought, too coquettish and French a look : all the

same it seemed to add a becoming mystery to her dark eyes which pleased him in some way that he could not explain. And she was called "Lucilia."

The bows of the boat struck a biggish wave and a douche of glittering spray came rattling into the ship. Trewent shook the water out of his eyes and ears like a dog, and glanced over his shoulder at Baverstock who was apologizing to the ladies for their bath.

"Perhaps you'd like to go back," he said; "the river——"

But Lucilia swung quickly round to her aunt. "I like this; don't you?" she asked.

Baverstock was surprised to find how his heart jumped.

"Well done, you, Miss Marston!" he called to her, and laughing with great pleasure turned to Trewent. "Take in a reef," he said, and pulled on the sheet.

They danced about in the waves for half an hour, the little cockle-shell of a blunt-nosed boat bumping and rolling in the midst of the deep waters, but answering her helm perfectly and never making a mistake. She listed over at some moments so sharply, that Baverstock had to jam one of his feet quickly between Lucilia and Miss Roach, pulling with all his might on the sheet and pressing down

the tiller as far as it would go, till Miss Roach felt that she would be squeezed overboard. At these moments, although he was unaware of it, Lucilia would let her dark eyes rest upon him, the lids half-closed, a dull curiosity, a drowsy interest in their depths. Midgley's dog, shot from his side by these sudden lists, would crouch down at Lucilia's feet and press himself against her ankles.

When they entered the river, Baverstock said to Miss Roach: "We can take it easier here. I hope you haven't been too much knocked about."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I begin already to feel that the river is tame."

Lucilia said quickly: "Yes."

"Don't you like river sailing, Miss Marston?"

She glanced across at him, coldly, and answered without a smile, "It is tame after the sea."

"Oh, everything is tame after the sea," he said.

She turned her face away, unbuttoning her thick ulster and loosing the scarf at her throat. Baverstock thought that her hands, innocent of rings, were very white and well-shaped.

Trewent unfastened the reef, and suggested that he should haul up the jib. But Baverstock asked Miss Roach if she cared to go on.

"Well, just a little way," she said.

For ten minutes they ran before the wind, and

then came about, tacking home, with many a good long leg, to the landing steps.

"Well, we've enjoyed it a lot. Thank you very much," said Miss Roach.

Baverstock was helping her up the steps. Lucilia stood on the top, waiting for them.

"I hope you'll come again," said Harry, "it's the best thing down here, the sailing."

Lucilia gave an arm to her aunt, and turning her head, said over her shoulder to Baverstock, "Thank you very much." It was as if a child had been taught a phrase and was saying it like a lesson.

They did not come downstairs for tea, and after tea they went for a walk together on the Spit. Baverstock sat in a deck chair on the balcony till it was too dark to read, and then went to the fire in the smoking-room, leaving the door open.

He saw them enter, and as Lucilia passed before his vision he felt, with a suddenness which took his breath away, that she meant more to him than any other creature on the earth. He jumped to his feet, and stood upright before the fire, with his left hand rubbing on the back of his head, his right hand holding his pipe a few inches away from his mouth.

"Good Lord," he exclaimed under his breath, "I'm in love!"

He said it seriously, solemnly, awfully. It was just as if he had been struck a blow. The intense and centred selfishness of his former life fell all in a single moment at his feet, an irreparable, a tragic ruin. He was bewildered, confounded, stunned. He felt himself go cold. He put out his right hand and rested it on the mantel-piece, grinding his teeth together, his eyes clouded with trouble.

He was thinking of somebody besides himself !

As he stood there, looking down at the smouldering fire, Midgley's dog entered the room, ran to his side, and jumped up, pawing at his legs. He lowered his left hand and mechanically stroked the creature's head.

CHAPTER VII

THAT night he dressed for dinner, and took some trouble in selecting a soft-fronted shirt and in tying his black tie. He descended the stairs slowly, his hands in the pockets of his dinner jacket, a book under his arm.

When he reached the hall, he found Miss Roach and Lucilia studying the cards hung upon the wall. The old lady looked towards him, and said, "We thought of going to St. Matthew's to-morrow."

He joined them, but found that he had nothing to say.

"We've ordered a fly," added the old lady. "It's too far to walk."

Lucilia was dressed in white, with a thin scarf of pale blue over her shoulders. Baverstock stood at Miss Roach's side, looking at Lucilia.

"Do you go to St. Matthew's?" asked Miss Roach.

"No."

"If you did, I was going to offer you a lift in our cab."

"Oh, that's very kind of you."

"Not at all." She turned away from the wall.

"Well, I'm quite ready for dinner. That sail has given me an appetite. I hope you didn't eat too big a tea!"

At that moment, Reimer came down the stairs.

As the light of the hall lamp fell upon his face, Lucilia drew perceptibly closer to Miss Roach's side.

Baverstock heard her draw in her breath.

Miss Roach said to her, very quietly, "Come, come, Lucilia!"

Reimer stood at the foot of the stairs, looking into the coffee-room, where Mrs. Midgley was inspecting the tables.

"Who is he?" asked Miss Roach.

"An American," said Baverstock, in a low voice; "he suffers from religious mania."

"Does he indeed. He doesn't look like it."

"He's some sort of Plymouth Brother, I believe."

"The least religious people on this earth!" said Miss Roach, with decision.

Louisa, with her boots squeaking noisily on the linoleum, appeared from the kitchen with the soup tureen, her face very hot, her hair rather untidy. She was two minutes late, and felt that everybody in the hall was accusing her.

"Come, come," said Miss Roach, once again. And Baverstock saw her glance sharply at Lucilia.

He got in front of the two ladies, hiding their view of Reimer, and said in a low voice, smiling to reassure them: "Everybody dislikes that old fellow; but he's really quite harmless. He tried to convert me one night, and he did it quite decently. But isn't it a forbidding face? You can see that he's always thinking of hell-fire."

Almost pushing past him, and with no cheerfulness or kindness in her voice, Miss Roach said, "Well, let's go to dinner."

As he followed behind them, feeling that he had offended, Baverstock saw that the girl shrank as she passed Reimer, although her aunt was between her and the American.

He was puzzled to account for this swift and hardly controlled repugnance. What did it mean? Had Lucilia seen this man before? Did she know something about him? Was Miss Roach's ignorance of Reimer assumed for purposes of deception?

As he followed the ladies towards the coffee-room he looked up at Reimer, and saw that the American was frowning in their direction, evidently at Lucilia.

Although he was greatly amazed, feeling that some mystery connected these people, he was too

absorbed by the knowledge that he was in love to think the matter out with direction and energy. He allowed his wonderment to race away with itself, unguided by his attention, that "mainspring" of mental mechanism.

Reimer nodded to him, and they exchanged a few words before entering the coffee-room. Mrs. Midgley was standing at the little table in the window, talking to Miss Roach, whose grey face was raised to listen, both her hands planted on the table. Lucilia, who looked pale and frightened, was keeping her eyes fixed upon her aunt's face.

Baverstock opened his book and pretended to read. He wanted Lucilia to see that he had no friendship with Hans Reimer. When he looked up as Louisa placed a plate of soup before him, he saw that Reimer's face was turned in the direction of the table in the window, a frown still on his forehead.

A feeling of anger took possession of him, he pushed his book away, took up his spoon, and said in rather a loud voice, "So you've been over to Swanscombe, Mr. Reimer?"

The American, who sat at the head of this table, brought his head round. "Yes, I walked over."

"You could have hired a car in Sandtown, and driven; did you know that?"

"I prefer walking."

Miss Roach was leaning across the table, speaking to Lucilia, who refused her soup, and, resting her chin on her left hand, the elbow propped on the table, was averting her face from the rest of the room. Miss Roach appeared to be exhorting her, speaking vigorously and yet with good-humour. She smiled constantly; now and again she laughed in a well-satisfied chuckle. It was like a school-mistress chaffing and coaxing a sulky child.

"Say ! "

Baverstock looked sharply at the American, who was bending towards him, jerking his head to summon Baverstock nearer.

"What do you want?" demanded the young man, surprised and annoyed.

"That girl over there—French or English?"

Baverstock looked at him with open annoyance, and some contempt. "English," he answered; "why do you want to know?"

"I was wondering."

Baverstock suddenly apprehended what this question meant. It meant that Reimer knew nothing of Lucilia. The mystery deepened, then! Why should she manifest so strong and positive a repugnance for some one who did not even know her nationality? Why was Miss Roach so earnestly

speaking to her in a low voice across the table? Why did she turn away her face?

He became aware that he was confronting a real mystery. In the midst of his other feelings, this knowledge slowly rose into prominence. He started, and wondered what was happening, as a spectator watches actors whose language he does not understand.

His common sense said to him: "This fellow Reimer inspires dislike wherever he goes. Lucilia is rather more sensitive to suggestion than other people. Her feeling of repugnance for Reimer is stronger than Mrs. Midgley's, stronger than old Trewent's, stronger than Louisa's: that is all!"

But the voice of common sense did not satisfy him.

He was drawn towards Lucilia by irresistible attraction. She laid a spell over his whole being. She was the one person in the world for him. Why, he asked himself, was she so strange and mysterious? Why was she so icily cold, so contemptuously arrogant, so disdainfully indifferent? She treated him as if he were a person of no consequence; and yet at the first glimpse of Reimer she manifested an extreme of sensitiveness. What was the reading of this riddle?

Reimer finished his dinner before anybody else, and withdrew to the smoking-room.

When he had gone, Miss Roach stooped down for her ash-stick, and with a smile to Lucilia, who had scarcely eaten anything, signalled that she was ready to go.

Baverstock rose from his chair and walked towards them. Lucilia flashed a look at him which seemed to imply that she regarded this action as an intrusion. Her resentment was not hot, but cold with scorn.

He said to Miss Roach, "If you'd rather go by car to-morrow, I'd gladly slip into Sandtown on my bicycle and get one out for you."

She did not stop, did not even raise her head, but answered him in a friendly way, thanking him for the kindness of his suggestion, and saying they would stick to the cab.

His heart began to thump. "Miss Marston," he said, "have you all the books you need, or can I lend you some?"

She looked across her aunt's head for a swift moment, and answered hurriedly, "We have all we want, thank you."

"Yes, we've got a trunkful of books," laughed Miss Roach, still hobbling forward with her head down.

Baverstock had nothing more to say.

As they got to the foot of the stairs, and just as he was branching dolefully away to the smoking-room, Miss Roach half looked back over her shoulder, and wished him good-night.

He felt that he could not face Reimer, and could not sit still. He threw his book on to the table, and went to the door. Midgley's dog trotted eagerly forward to join him. He opened the door, and the dog darted forward to get at any rat that might be humping along in the tamarisks. Baverstock looked back to the stairs, but the glass of the lamp prevented him from seeing anything. He went out, and shut the door with a bang.

There was a young moon, and the night was not dark. He walked to the side of the hotel and clambered through the tamarisks on to the wall above the sea. The wind struck coldly at his chest, and he turned up the collar of his jacket, holding it across his body.

He was in love, and he did not know in the least what to make of it.

Love seemed to him a power that ought to be quite natural and regular. It ought, for instance, to mean for him a disposition to annex a certain woman who would very quietly and gratefully surrender to his summons. There ought to be

no difficulty about the matter. Masculine obeisance, masculine supplication, masculine entreaties and beseechings—these things seemed to him the very topsy-turvy of the natural order. But here was a woman, and here was love; and she disdained him, ignored him, overlooked him and scorned him; yet his love remained, it was there still to reckon with and to frustrate his peace of mind.

What to do?

Could he prostrate himself? He didn't know how to do it. Could he implore her for mercy and pity and compassion, pleading the hunger and thirst of his heart's need? He knew nothing of that language, not even the alphabet.

What he wanted to do was to go up against her, to seize her in his strong hands and overpower her, bearing down resistance, making her his captive.

This, he concluded, would be primitive and natural. And grinding his teeth in the salt wind he consigned civilization to the devil.

Suddenly it struck him that civilization had made this exquisite creature what she was; nothing in her delicate body, nothing in her difficult mind, belonged to the savage world of gross bodies and ignorant souls; she was the daughter of art, the child of everything civilization stands for—love, knowledge, sensibility and self-realization.

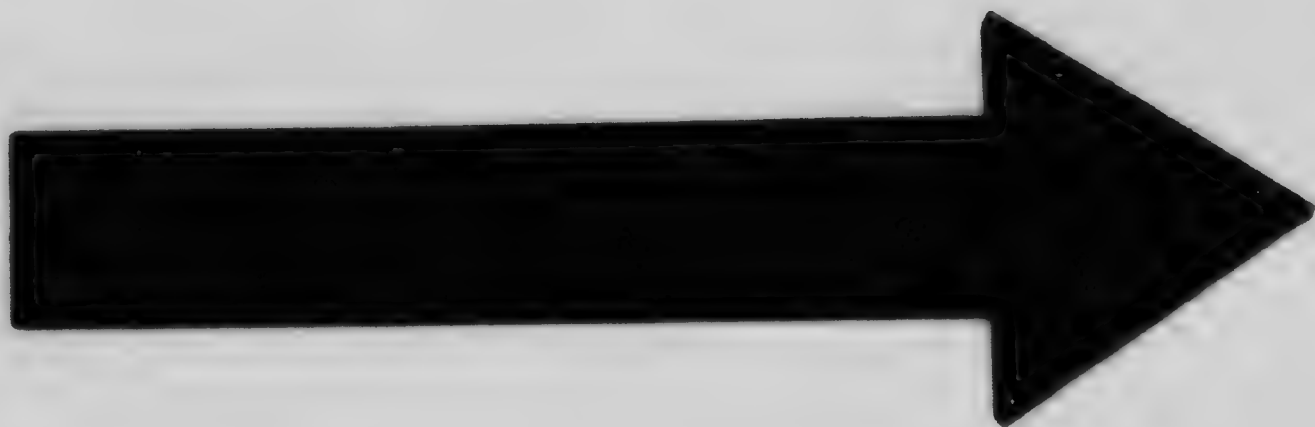
He felt himself to be a savage.

"I suppose," he thought to himself, "that if some long-chinned, greasy-haired fellow turned up here with a violin and a big black bow-tie, she would sparkle into vitality and rain a thousand smiles upon him. He would be able to talk her language. He would not offend her ritual. They would understand each other, and, if I made my appearance, they would raise their eyebrows, exchange glances, and smile with amusement. A clodhopper!"

He waited in the night till to stand motionless any longer on the wall was a torture to him. He let himself down, walked across the shingle to the gateway, and with his hands in his pockets paced up and down the sand in front of the landing-steps.

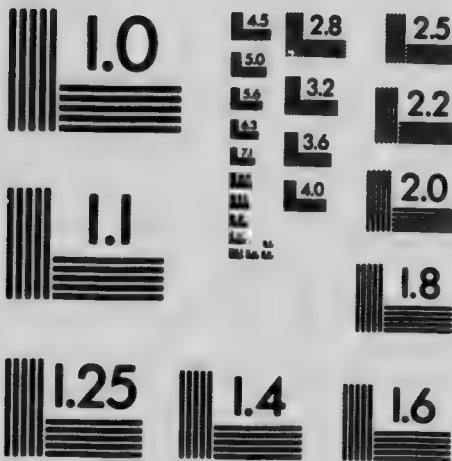
The boat in which he had sailed that afternoon was swinging at her moorings, her mast-light rocking from side to side. The ferry-boat was bumping with three or four other old craft just under the wall; the wash of the water on the steps made a deep splashing sound which deadened the wide rustle of the tide.

Ahead of him along the Spit a lamp was burning in a low-roofed cottage half-buried in sand. It was Trewent's home. He thought to himself: "That's how love ends; a little cage with a devil in



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it—life a hell ! Poor old Trewent ! Poor old, silly old fool ! ”

And yet, could he stop loving Lucilia ? Could he pluck this new thing out of his heart by the roots and throw it away from him ? Even if he knew for very certain that the end of it would be Trewent's end, could he deny it and annihilate it ?

Could the tide stop flowing ?

He rubbed his face in his hands, ruffled his hair with vigour, and whistling to Midgley's dog, started to run back to the hotel.

He was shivering with cold.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER the most melancholy Sunday he had ever spent—for Miss Roach and her niece remained in Sandtown for the whole day—Harry Baverstock rode off to his work early on Monday morning, determined, come what might, that he would force himself upon Lucilia that day, and make her know that he loved her.

He planned, to begin with, that he would return to luncheon, and make himself pleasant to Miss Roach. Then, he would get away from work soon after four, so that he might be in the hotel at tea-time. With any luck he hoped to sit in the company of Lucilia till seven o'clock, impressing her so thoroughly with the state of his feelings that she and her aunt would talk things over while they dressed for dinner. He would then be able to judge by their manner at dinner whether they were inclined to admit him into closer intimacy.

But these imaginings of the poor lover were horribly knocked about by the editorial pencil of fate.

Harry arrived at the scene of his engineering operations to find that the navvies had encountered unexpected rock in their excavations. All the morning he toiled at this check with his foreman. When he should have been making himself pleasant to Miss Roach he was working out very difficult calculations to see how big a rent this difficulty would make in his firm's estimate. The foreman argued that they should turn aside and avoid the rock; Harry was inclined to doubt if the contract would allow them to do so. They went over the ground again and again. They calculated the cost of boring. They consulted a local geologist.

A telegram was despatched to London at two o'clock. The answer, which did not help him in the least, arrived at half-past four. He went over the ground with his foreman till it was dark, and finally abandoned the task for that day without having solved the difficulty. In a very dismal condition of soul, he mounted his bicycle, and rode back to the hotel. A cold and clammy wind was blowing off a sea inclined to be foggy.

Trewent was not to be seen, so he pushed the bicycle to the shed himself, and put it away. As he was turning out the lamps, Midgley's dog came crawling towards him, slowly and dejectedly, as though it expected a beating.

"Hullo, Jack," he exclaimed; "you down on your luck, too? What's the matter, old fellow? Who's been nasty to you?"

The dog wagged its stump of a tail, and drew its ribs along Baverstock's leg, looking up at him wistfully.

Harry walked round the tamarisks, clattered over the shingle of the drive, and went up the steps of the hotel, the dog going slowly ahead, as though leading him.

Some one was sitting in a deck chair at the far corner, quite in shadow.

Baverstock started, hearing a movement, and glanced in that direction. He stopped with his hand reached out to open the door, his heart beating. Midgley's dog uttered a low growl.

What would he give for five minutes alone with Lucilia!

The voice of Hans Reimer came from the shadow. "Back from work, Mr. Baverstock?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"I've been thinking of you."

"Really."

"An old man's thoughts!"

"Well, I'm going in now to change my clothes."

"Don't trouble," said Reimer, with meaning, "to make an elaborate toilet."

"What do you mean?"

"The ladies have gone."

"Gone!"

"Aye."

"But——"

"They left early this morning."

"I thought they were staying for a month."

"Well, they've gone."

Baverstock turned the handle of the door and entered the hotel. The dog went ahead of him, ran to the door of the Midgleys' private room and pushed it open. Mrs. Midgley was standing just inside, talking to her husband, who was sitting in a desk chair, smoking his pipe, and looking up at her.

She turned her head, saw Baverstock, and beckoned him to come in. The dog curled itself up on the hearthrug.

"I've got a piece of bad news for you," said Mrs. Midgley.

"What's happened now?"

"Miss Roach and Miss Marston have gone."

"How's that?"

"Well, it's my positive belief," she began, speaking in a low voice, but vigorously, and even vindictively, "that we owe this loss to——"

Midgley interrupted her, turning down the wick

of the lamp which had begun to smoke a little in the draught from the open door. "Oh, come now; we've got nothing to go upon for that. It's just a suspicion."

Baverstock noticed his horrid nails.

"What else should they go for?" demanded his wife. "I said to Miss Roach, 'I hope you've got no complaint against us, madam?' and she said, most emphatically, 'None at all, Mrs. Midgley, none at all.' Nothing could be more straight and honest. You know how she looks at you with her grey eyes, like a man, straight and direct. 'None at all, Mrs. Midgley, none at all.'"

"But what reason did she give?" asked Baverstock.

"She said her niece's health was too troublesome for a place so far away and exposed."

"And you think——?"

"I think it's that horrible American. I'm sure of it. She was quite different directly he appeared. Why, she hardly touched her dinner on Saturday; and yesterday they went to church and never came back for a single meal. This morning they had breakfast up in their room, and by eleven o'clock they were driving away. We've lost two good customers for one who's like to drive everybody away by his ugly phiz!"

It appeared that Mrs. Midgley was persuading her husband to turn Reimer out, and that Midgley was refusing to be persuaded. Baverstock left them still arguing, and went upstairs to change his clothes.

He was very dejected.

Trewent was on the landing with his box of tools under his arm.

"We've lost the two ladies," he said.

"So I hear."

"Gone to Baskerton."

Baverstock stopped at his door and turned round.

"How do you know?"

"They consulted me about driving there."

"Oh! I wonder where they are stopping."

"I know that, too."

"You're a clever fellow."

"I told the old lady it depended where they wanted to go to in Baskerton, and she said in reply to that, 'The Cavendish Hotel.' So I told them it was a matter of seven miles, and a baddish road till you get to Fippington. That was right, wasn't it?"

"Quite right."

"They decided to go by train from Sandtown, and I don't blame them."

When Baverstock came downstairs, Reimer was just entering from the balcony with his snuff-coloured cloak over his shoulders, his spectacles and a book in his hand.

"I guess it's about dinner-time," he said, glancing at the grandfather clock.

Baverstock did not answer him.

CHAPTER IX

BASKERTON has been built by Sickness and Retirement. Its history dates from that period in the Victorian Era when people began to talk about the healthful properties of the pine-tree. In order to build houses for invalids, it is true that a great number of pine-trees on the cliffs of Baskerton had to be very illogically cut down, but a number still remained to attract the invalid and to scent the warm and languorous air on a particularly hot summer's day.

Then came the Anglo-Indians—the collector, the judge, the colonel, the major and the policeman. Red-bricked houses, with gardens composed chiefly of shrubberies and bad lawns, began to cover the pine-clad cliffs. Lawn-tennis clubs thrived in the summer, and Badminton clubs in the winter. The shops improved. There was a general appearance in the town of comfort, prosperity, and the conventions. A church of red sandstone, with a very ugly roof and a preposterous tower, took the place of a wooden chapel. A public

garden was opened. A marine drive came into being. Finally, a small and elegant pier stepped into the sea.

As soon as theatrical companies and musicians discovered Baskerton, the place hastened the paces of its evolution. The railway company came nearer to the town and built an immense station. A rich Baptist erected a Baptist chapel. A pious lady of the Methodist body set up a Methodist chapel on the opposite side of the same street. A jerry-builder ran up lines of villas for the gentry's servants. Lodging-house spinsters crept into the town with their dreadful furniture, their black shawls and their smelling-salts. A steam laundry sent its cards round to the nobility and gentry. Doctors, dentists and lawyers descended upon the town. A Conservative Club made its appearance. The Navy League, the Primrose League, the Empire League, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Church Missionary Society, and the societies for preventing cruelty to children and animals discovered honorary secretaries among the unemployed ladies and gentlemen of the town. Bazaars became a feature. Everybody appeared to be organizing everybody else. Everything went up in price. The poor began to grumble and complain. Radicals set up in the poorer part of the

town a Radical Working Men's Club, paid for by the rich Baptist who hated the Establishment more than he loved his own denomination. Everything was quietly and conventionally disordered, divided and opposed, till the daughter of a retired Major-General started a branch of the Women's Social and Political Union, and a fire-eating retired Colonel of Engineers started a branch of the Rationalist Press Association. Then the disorder became dangerously stormful.

The Cavendish Hotel stood at the far end of the town, on the highest part of the sandstone cliff, surrounded by a very delightful garden spoilt by abominable statues lately set up by an improving manager. It was the hotel to which the best people went, and not the hotel at which public dinners were given. The servants were English. There was no orchestra. And only very occasionally did one see a woman who smoked in the lounge and exposed her ankles.

Miss Roach and Lucilia were sitting one evening in this respectable lounge waiting for dinner, when some one approached them through the little knot of old gentlemen and old ladies standing by the table of newspapers, and greeted them as an old acquaintance.

It was Harry Baverstock.

"I've just ridden over," he said; "a perfect evening, but a frightful road; I nearly took a toss into the sea at the top of Poll's Point. How do you like Baskerton? More civilized than the Spit, but nothing like such air."

He pulled up a chair and sat down.

Miss Roach liked him, and was not at all displeased to see him. She was quite friendly and made no demur when he asked if he might dine at their table. Harry felt himself lifted into the seventh heaven by the warmth of her welcome.

Lucilia looked more beautiful than ever, and he persuaded himself that she was less cold and arrogant in appearance, although he perceived that her manner towards him had not changed. He found himself more than ever in love with her, and said to himself, as he followed them into the coffee-room: "I must be careful how I behave, and take great care how I talk, for she is extraordinarily sensitive and refined."

When they were seated he said to her, "I hope you are better, Miss Marston," speaking more gently than was his wont.

"I like this place," she answered, without looking at him.

"And didn't you like Sandspit at all?"

"Not very much."

"Of course it's only a rough makeshift of a place, but Mrs. Midgley does rather well with it, don't you think?"

"Yes."

"It wasn't the hotel that was unsuitable," said Miss Roach, looking up from her soup with a gruffish laugh, "it was that dreadful-looking——"

"Aunt Emily, please!"

Baverstock was struck by the distress in Lucilia's voice, but he laid restraint upon himself and did not look at her.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" demanded Miss Roach, briskly and humorously.

"You mean Hans Reimer?" asked Baverstock.

"Oh, that's his name, is it? Well, he's a very horrible-looking person. I don't know whenever I saw a more disagreeable face. My niece couldn't bear the sight of him."

"Then I owe him an extra grudge," said Baverstock, "for driving you away."

"Oh, I don't know anything about that."

"If I throw him into the sea will you come back?"

"To see you marched off to the lock-up? No; I don't think we would. What's this fish?"

Baverstock said that he was like to be hanged over the matter of his work, whether he pitched

Reimer into the sea or allowed him to crawl about the earth inspiring horror and aversion. He told them about the check in his plans, and Miss Roach listened to him with interest, a light of real friendship in the smile of her grey eyes.

This old lady was saying to herself: "Now, if I were a young girl I should certainly admire this youth, whose face is so fresh, whose spirits are so high, and whose heart is so evidently in his work. I might even fall in love with him, for he has a taking way of looking at one, and his skin is such a good colour; and as for his teeth, why, it's quite an entertainment to watch the light playing on them. If Lucilia——" But here the old lady glanced at her niece, and saw that she was paying not the least attention to Baverstock's narrative.

Lucilia was looking about her, with that expression of disdain on her face which so completely masked the true state of her feelings. One would have said that this very pretty girl with the raised eyebrows, the straight fringe and large eyes, was interested, in a rather contemptuous spirit, in the dresses of the other women. Her eyes looked from table to table, sleepily, disdainfully, as though the Beauty of the London season had strayed into a parlour full of vulgar provincials.

"Now, this young man," thought Miss Roach,

"is just the very person to give Lucilia a fresh interest in life. I must really make her show him some attention. At present, I think she is hardly aware of his existence."

But Miss Roach's efforts in this direction were not successful. She endeavoured to make Lucilia listen to what Baverstock was saying by asking her amusing questions concerned with engineering and water works; Lucilia answered in monosyllables without the shadow of a smile.

In the lounge, where they drank their coffee, she picked up a fashion journal lying on the next chair and studied the pictures.

Baverstock rode back to Sandspit fairly well-pleased with himself. At least Miss Roach had been kind, and Lucilia's manner had not been violently antipathetic. To make him happy, he felt more keenly than ever that Lucilia was the most beautiful creature in the world. It gave him pleasure as he raced through the cold air to think about the softness of her skin, the richness of her towering hair, and the depth of light in those great eyes of hers. When he thought about her very small mouth, which pouted like a spoilt child's, he felt a mysterious surging of his blood and a sudden sensation of suffocation in his lungs.

He waited for three days and then rode over

again. During dinner he asked if he might come on Saturday afternoon in a car and take them for a drive. Miss Roach said that she liked to know something about her chauffeur before she went motoring, and when Harry assured her that he had driven his father's 40-horse-power over some of the most dangerous roads in the country for two years, and that he had never had a single accident, and that his licence had never been endorsed, she looked at Lucilia, and said: "Well, you must persuade that young lady. What do you say, Lucilia? Would you like to go motoring?"

There was the least suggestion of a shrugging of the shoulders on Lucilia's part, a just perceptible increase of her pout, and she said in her cold and callous way: "If you care about it, I will go; but I am not keen."

"You would rather sail, I think," said Miss Roach.

"Oh, yes, of course; the sea is quite different."

Baverstock's heart beat with hope. "Are you really fond of sailing?" he asked, eagerly.

She looked at him. "Yes," she said; "I like being on the sea."

"We have just come back from a tour round the world," said Miss Roach.

"Well, look here—" Baverstock's eyes were

shining—"may I come over on Saturday and take you for a sail, if the weather's at all decent of course; and may I come over on Sunday and take you for a motor drive? Will you let me do that?"

"I should like the sailing," said Lucilia.

"We should be taking up a lot of your time," said Miss Roach.

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure. You don't know the relief, after a hard week's work——"

"Well, we shall be very pleased. Come to luncheon with us on Saturday."

"You could sail over," said Lucilia.

"My bicycle will bring me quicker."

The weather held good. Baverstock engaged a comfortable boat and for two hours they sailed about a sea just boisterous enough for exhilaration and not rough enough for discomfort or alarm. He scarcely exchanged a word with Lucilia all this time, but he was perfectly happy watching her face which visibly brightened in the wind. Once, when a splash of water came rattling over the side, she turned to her aunt, and smiled with the drops of water beading her face. It was the first time Harry had seen her smile.

How he loved her! There was no mystery to tease and trouble him now. He accepted her as she was. Nothing in her soul or body would he have

had different. Her disdain was part of her. Her coldness rendered her sublime. To love her without question, to love her with the most complete satisfaction, to love her with the worship and rapture of a devotee who loses himself in a transcendence inexpressible and indefinable, this was a full and suffusing happiness.

She was herself now, dissociated and disconnected from the rest of mankind. He could, therefore, see nothing strange in her, nothing to perplex, nothing to suggest a mystery. She was herself, supreme, wonderful, perfect. To be like her was to be beautiful and sublime. Nature had fashioned her. Man and the world had given nothing to this exquisite creature, whose arrogance and disdain were but the expression of a soul seeking some excellence nowhere to be found outside of its own domain.

Her love for the sea was intelligible. She escaped on the waves of ocean from too close contact with second-rateness and platitudinous conformity. Here all was wild, boundless, and tremendous. The very heavens were farther off. Nothing beneath was solid and unchangeable. At every moment life was active and achieving. One was alone with something infinitely greater, stronger, and more splendid than oneself.

Because these thoughts came to him in the beat of his feelings he was silent. And when they landed and walked towards the cliff path he was silent too, feeling that chatter would offend her. Miss Roach took his arm up the stiff path, and did not talk because the ascent troubled her breathing. Every now and then Lucilia, who was walking slowly ahead, would stop and look sideways towards the sea.

When they were in the hotel, Baverstock still maintained this silence, only answering Miss Roach when she spoke to him, and then in a few words.

While tea was being served Miss Roach was called away. Baverstock did not speak to Lucilia during her absence. He sat looking straight before him, slightly stooping, his hands clasped between his knees.

He looked at her, wistfully, when he said good-bye, and it seemed to him that she did not withdraw her hand as quickly as was usual with her.

He was filled with the most intense sadness—the deep and brooding sadness of the lover. He rode back in a daze, a heaviness pressing on his soul, a sense of intolerable solitude at his heart.

Sunday discovered in his feelings, however, the gaiety, carelessness, and rapture of the lover who feels himself invincible. He rode into Sandtown,

left his bicycle in the garage, and set off in a hired car for Baskerton.

To control this car gave him a sense of deep pleasure. He changed gears on the steep hills without the rattle of a blunder and without the nervous haste of the inexperienced; he might have been driving a car every day of his life for the last six weeks. He opened the throttle with almost a sensuous pleasure, and on a straight piece of road increased his speed from twenty, twenty-five, thirty, to thirty-three miles an hour. The wind pressed against his forehead and drove at his eyes. He eased down, and said to himself, "It is not so speedy as the bicycle, it's not so risky: but, somehow or another, it's bigger." He began to think of the car he intended to buy when he had got a little more money.

At luncheon he was quietly cheerful. Miss Roach thought to herself, "The English public school turns out a most likable man." She was disposed to make fun of him, and jested against his jests, teasing him, with a pretty interest in his ideas. Lucilia scarcely spoke, and never smiled at this play of wit.

They left the hotel soon after two, Miss Roach and Lucilia together in the body of the car, Baverstock alone in the front. He was perfectly content

with this arrangement. He was, indeed, supremely happy.

The town was drowsing after its Sunday dinner. Baverstock had the pleasant feeling, as the car hummed through the shuttered High Street, with its idle tram lines and its empty pavements, of having stolen a march on the world. It was like being up before the dawn.

The gilt letters over these shops, some small and modest, others flaunting and vain-glorious, suddenly streamed up to him and flashed tremblingly past into the uneventful silence which he had disturbed with his engine. In some of the larger windows, he could see against the darkness of blue linen blinds, the blurred reflection of his car. At cross roads the hoarse bass warning of the horn broke up the immediate somnolence of the street and called to invisible distance to wake up and be watchful. He changed down into his third speed where the street ascends from the public gardens and the louder, sharper note of his engine made it seem that the car was hurrying with a fresh excitement, a new impatience, towards adventure.

When the town was left behind, and with a little dip of its springs the car exchanged wood pavement for macadam, Harry had the feeling of one who has

got through farewells and is settled down to a journey.

It was a grey day, but without depression. The leafless hedges, which were tall and ragged, fenced with uncertain brown the far-stretching, steel-blue road powdered with whitish dust. In the hedges stood stunted oaks all blown by the prevailing wind in one direction. From the rank grass which margined the road, tarred telegraph posts rose stiff and regular, stretching their wires which hummed for the pedestrian but which were dumb for the motorists.

Every now and then, where the hedges were broken by a gateway they caught momentary glimpses over ploughed fields and distant woodlands of the shimmering sea and cottages on the cliffs. On the other side of the road they saw cattle close to the gates, and the hills in the distance.

Baverstock thought to himself, "This is not at all a bad car, though it is noisy in the lowest speed, and the steering wheel isn't quite stiff enough for my taste." He began to wonder whether he could get up the hill in front of him without going down into the bottom speed.

Miss Roach said to Lucilia, "Well, do you like it?"

Lucilia, who only just caught these words, turned

to her aunt and nodded her head. "But I like the sea much better," she answered. "Are you warm enough?"

"Quite. But I feel that my hat is very ridiculously on one side. He's driving too fast, I think."

They went up the hill on the third speed, fairly comfortably at fifteen miles an hour, and when they reached the top and Baverstock pulled up that they might see the extraordinary view from this point, his eyes were shining with pride over this achievement.

"My goodness, what a distance we've come!" exclaimed Miss Roach, looking back over the folded hood of the car. "Baskerton looks like a little village. And what a hill! Shall we have to go down it?"

"We came up on the third," said Baverstock.

"I've no doubt we did, but I haven't the least idea what it means. I'm more interested in the question of getting down this hill. It looks like a precipice."

"Oh, that's all right," said Baverstock, "we've got very recent brakes."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it. You drive too fast, I think, all the same."

Baverstock said, "Why, we never did more than

thirty-five. That's the most you can get out of this car. It's only a fifteen, you know. I was thinking of Miss Marston. She likes the sea, and I thought she would find motoring slow if I stuck to the twenties. Do you like it, Miss Marston?"

"Yes."

"Am I driving too fast for you?"

"Not for me, but for my aunt——"

Miss Roach laughed. "Oh, don't make me the wet blanket of the party, if you please. Go as fast as you like. But pray be careful going down this hill. I shall shut my eye till we're at the bottom."

"Oh, I'm not going back this way," said Bawstock, turning to his wheel and his gear handle. "I'm taking you another route altogether."

He depressed his clutch, moved the gearing, and glided off, quickly and quietly changing up till the top speed was reached. They travelled at twenty-five miles an hour along the downs; and then, with the clutch out, the hand-brake scratching for a moment now and then over the ratchet, they followed a slow curving road that very charmingly rose and fell as it descended from the downs between high banks of chalk and gorse to the wooded valley below.

In this valley the trees came about them and darkened their way, the trunks of elm and oak and

beech rising solidly up from a carpet of dead leaves and stretching their boughs, with the light entanglement of their branches, across the soft and marsh-like road which was scored by cart-wheels. Pheasants ran from the grass-borders into the woods; chaffinches flashed across the road; Lucilia saw a squirrel leap to a tree and disappear on the other side of the trunk.

Baverstock thought to himself, "This would be a nasty place for a side slip."

When they emerged from the wood, they were in a delightful valley which was only just recovering from recent rains. The river which curled through the meadow was full to its brim, and in certain places overflowed into the fields. At the gates, where the cattle had trampled down the soil, there were pools of water, which shone like silver in the grey air.

They passed a village and saw the children going towards the thatched church with prayer-books and hymn-books. Women with babies in their arms stood in the gardens. The bell of the church was ringing. A party of boys ran across the graves in the churchyard to see them pass. The door of a pretty cottage opened, and the curate came out.

The road became rougher. The car jolted. Baverstock slowed down to twenty miles, and kept

a firm hold of the steering wheel. The bumping of the car made Miss Roach laugh.

The light faded from the sky. Mournfulness and age-long weariness settled over the face of the earth. The cold increased. Lucilia's eyes became more beautiful as she watched the going of the sad day.

Baverstock was wondering whether he could get back to the hotel without lighting his lamps.

It was dusk when they entered Baskerton.

"Well, we've had a very pleasant and a safe drive," said Miss Roach, "but I'm frozen to death, and I don't mind telling you so." The porter helped her to get down. "You'd better come in and have some tea," she said, planting her stick on the ground.

Lucilia went to her side, and gave the old lady her arm. "Are you frozen, too?" asked Miss Roach.

"No; but I'm rather tired."

"Well, you'll sleep well, so that's no great matter."

As they sat in the lounge, as close to the fire as they could get, Baverstock talked of motoring, and described Shropshire country, and said he would like to get them up there for a run in his father's forty-horse-power.

"Your father," said Miss Roach, "fought in the South African War, did he not?"

"Yes."

"He was nursed by a friend of mine in Kimberley."

"Really!"

"She told me about him. He's faddy, isn't he?"

Baverstock laughed. "I should say so! By George, you ought to see him at home. He runs the whole show. And he gets worried out of his life if anything goes wrong. But he's a splendid man all the same. He knows what he's about."

"My friend told me that he would never swallow a dose of medicine till he knew what it contained, and insisted upon studying his wound every time the bandages were removed. He used to argue with the doctors."

"I've no doubt he did," said Harry. "I know that he keeps a medicine chest at home, and undertakes to cure all the ills of humanity. He nearly killed our old butler once, but he wouldn't call the doctor in all the same. I admire him for that. His collection of lozenges is the finest in the world, and he never goes out without a stick of cinnamon in his pocket."

This conversation led to a very friendly feeling,

and although Lucilia took no part in it she appeared to listen with some interest. It was only when he was driving home that Baverstock perceived any reason for dissatisfaction with this talk by the fire. He had told a great deal about himself; he had learned nothing at all about Lucilia or Miss Roach.

"I will ask Miss Roach point-blank," said Harry, "the very next time I meet her, whether she'll stand by me and help me through with Lucilia."

His head-lamps shone suddenly upon the figure of a man walking in the darkness wrapped in a cloak. He slipped out his clutch, depressed the pedal of the foot brake, and dragged up the handle of the other brake.

"Shall I give you a lift?" he asked, looking back.

Hans Reimer stopped, raised his head, and then seeing who it was, came forward. He looked as if he had been startled out of a reverie.

CHAPTER X

THAT night in the smoking-room of the Sandspit Hotel, Hans Reimer suddenly made an impassioned attack upon the indifference of Harry Baverstock.

He became a changed man. To Baverstock, watching him with a sick amazement, he was quite detestable, even loathsome, in his fanaticism. The man's face grew livid, he sweated, his eyes, which seemed to diminish, shone with a spiritual delirium, his voice vibrated, his hands twitched in his lap.

To the engineer, who was always calm even in the presence of sudden catastrophe, and whose courage always rose to the measure of the danger which threatened him, this exhibition of uncontrollable feeling was exceedingly contemptible.

Baverstock had said to him that he did not choose to go through life like a scavenger, and he hated the vile as greatly as he abominated the abnormal; that he saw no good in dwelling on the badness and blackness of humanity; that a wise man should keep a healthy mind in a clean body, and go straight ahead on the broad highway of life,

looking only for what is fine, strong and wholesome, ignoring everything else.

This seemed to incense the American, who had tried at the beginning quite calmly to interest Baverstock in the importance of religion.

So angry did he grow that the engineer at last cut him short.

"Look here," he said, curtly; "men, it seems, can never discuss these things without losing their tempers; I think you had better keep your ideas to yourself." And he raised his book.

"Ideas that are consuming me!" burst out Reimer, with a gesture of the hands.

"Why should they consume you?"

"Why? Because I know the need. I've lived in hell. I've done the work of Satan. I——"

He stopped suddenly, convulsed by a shudder that left him white and trembling.

"Well, all the same——"

"Listen to me," cried Reimer, raising his right hand, the fist clenched. "Men like you kept me where I was! Men like this curate here kept me where I was. I might have been even now where I was then but for——" He hurriedly placed his hand in the breast-pocket of his coat, and dragged out a shabby letter-case, which he opened slowly, albeit, with trembling hands, taking from it a

photograph and handing it to Baverstock. "That child saved me," he said, with a voice of deep emotion. "Look at the picture. Study that pure face. I looked into those clear eyes and I saw innocence, purity, confidence, love—God Himself. In a moment I saw there something else—something I'd never seen before. It was the reflection of myself, black with sin, scarlet with iniquity. Heaven was in the eyes of that child; for me, however, I could see there only my own hell. But you, with your talk of scavengers, and this curate here with his fine talk of loving good more than hating evil—what could you have done to bring home to my soul the knowledge that saved me? I was crushed to the ground. I was broken up. I was smashed. Then the thought came, A Saviour! I tell you a man who has lived in hell and done the work of Satan knows as none other knows the need for a Redeemer. That's why the joy of heaven increases when such a man turns to God. Don't you see? Why, the one meaning of Christ is the saving of sinners. What did He say? 'Those who are whole have no need for a physician; I am come to seek the lost; I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.' What a Scavenger! He did not sit with the respectable and the intellectual talking about ritual and

mysteries and loving good more than hating evil. No! He said to the poor broken devil whom the Pharisee would not touch, would not look at, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee!' What would you have said? What would the curate here have said? Why, you wouldn't even have made them feel that they *were* sinners."

Baverstock handed back the photograph. "It's a very pretty child," he said, in a mollifying voice, telling an untruth, for the thought the child sullen and uninteresting. "As for your sermon, honour bright it's clean over my head. I don't understand a word of it. Perhaps I'm stupid; I daresay I am. I can't make head or tail of these matters. I never could." He stretched his legs and began to lift his book from his legs.

"The forgiveness of sins," said Reimer, in a quieter voice, "the biggest fact of the universe!—well, it takes some understanding. But what beats me in you is this: first, your self-satisfaction, your cool indifference to the mystery of life; second, your deadness and coldness towards those who are sinking before your very eyes into eternal hell. Don't you ever feel afraid? Don't you ever put out a hand to help the sad, the sorrowful, and the lost?"

This man's passion irritated Baverstock. It came

beating against his consciousness like the sound of some one knocking at another door. He had never thought about religion. There were religious people in the world, he knew, just as there were violinists, poets, conjurers and actors: labour carried all these folk on its back, and but for labour they could not exist: he was interested in the bigger animal, not in its parasites. He said to Reimer—

"Really and truly, I can't follow you. It's a case of looking at the same thing from two quite different angles. You see one world, I see another. We can't discuss the matter because we're each of us discussing something of which the other is completely ignorant. You may be right; I may be wrong; but we shall never agree."

Reimer exclaimed, "But don't you see, wherever you go, sin ruining the bodies and souls of men: don't you read in your newspaper of Satan's destroying hatred of good? Why the little town where you're working is rotten with sin. Look at the streets of London. Look at the devilries practised on the natives of Africa. What cruelty, what bloodshed, what denial of God! Man alive, the whole world is crying out to you, 'Come and save us!'—and you stop your ears, turn away your eyes, and speak contemptuously of the sewer."

Baverstock got upon his feet.

"It's no use," he said, laughing. "I can't keep it up." He glanced down for a moment at the old man, smiling very nicely, and said, "Good-night, Mr. Reimer: peaceful dreams; I'm sorry I can't give you better sport."

"Take care!" cried the American, his eyes flashing maliciously. "Take care, young man!"

"I'll look out, you may be sure."

"Some day you may cry out in an agony——"

Baverstock turned at the door, no smile on his face, his eyes stern with resentment and contempt. "Oh, come, Mr. Reimer," he said, very coldly, "no man will ever convince me that God is inferior to a gentleman. Whatever He may be, He can't be gratified by cowardice and terror. He can't want us to whine?"

Reimer sprang to his feet. "Listen to this," he said. "It shall be my last word." He began turning the pages of his book, still holding the photograph of the child and the old letter-case in the hand which supported the volume. Baverstock surveyed him with dislike. When the old man, after blowing at the leaves, wetted his right thumb at his lips and forced a page to turn, Baverstock thought, "What a vulgar old tradesman it is!"

The American, frowning at the page, exclaimed suddenly—

"Here it is. Listen now. This is written by Thomas Erskine."

And he began to read—

"It was the experience of an insupportable burden of grief which I could by no means cast off, which led me to consider Jesus not as a substitute, but as the Head and Fountain of Salvation, supplying us with His own Spirit, so that we may use the discipline of life, the agony of life, as He did, to learn obedience, to learn to find in the will of God, which appoints our path, a union with the mind of God."

He looked up over his spectacles, still holding the book open, and asked, "Has it never occurred to you that for millions of men, *millions*, there is an agony of life: and that man has no medicine for that agony?"

Baverstock, who was feeling sleepy, and who had not grasped the passage which Reimer had read to him, replied: "Life is better than it was, and, thanks to science, it's getting better every decade or so. It's a mistake, I think, to cry out over toothache, rheumatism and heartache. A man worth his salt can endure anything. Plenty of

good fellows have died with a smile or a jest. However, it's time to let Nature have her way; I'm inordinately sleepy, Mr. Reimer. If you were to motor in an open car you'd enjoy better nights, I'm sure you would."

He went out of the room, and left Reimer standing on the hearthrug, with the book, the letter-case, and the photograph still in his hand.

He encountered Mrs. Midgley as he crossed the hall, and jerking his thumb over his shoulder towards the smoking-room door, he said: "You're right; he's a raving maniac on religion. I've had a time in there, I can tell you."

As he undressed he thought of Lucilia, but Reimer continually thrust himself into these meditations. Baverstock was vexed to find himself thinking of such abstruse questions as the forgiveness of sins, the incarnation of a Divine Person, the redemption of the world by the death of that Being. Lucilia was simpler. And she had been kinder, really kinder: he thought that he might well show his hand more decidedly to Miss Roach.

"Suppose," he thought to himself, "that in spite of all to-day's happy auguries, Lucilia should say No. I can't imagine it; but I should like to discover what my feelings would be in that event. Should I cry out, and break my heart, and fall into

galloping consumption? I don't think I should. A man like old Reimer would knock clean under. He'd be done for. He'd crack in half. He'd go weeping and wailing to an untimely grave. All the same I should be hit deuced hard."

When the light was out, and his ruffled head had worked itself into a comfortable position on the pillow, he felt that the bed was gliding forward with him into pitch blackness, that his hands were on a steering wheel, and that an engine was throbbing in his ears. "I must buy a car," he said; and began to think of the different makes.

Just before he fell asleep he said to himself: "A man who has got his living to make, and who enjoys perfect health, doesn't bother his head about next-world conundrums. Idle people, monks, spinsters and valetudinarians, take up religion because they've really nothing else to do. It's just a distraction, a kind of hobby."

Three days elapsed before he paid his next visit to the ladies at Baskerton. One of the heads of the firm came down to see the work at Sandtown, and stayed a night. Baverstock was busy. Moreover he felt it was diplomatic to let a little time run by before he made Miss Roach aware of his feelings.

It was a very beautiful warm day when he rode

over to the prosperous town on the cliffs. The sea was as smooth as a table-cloth. The sky was a deep blue. There was scarcely a breath of wind. The shadows had depth and outline. In the grass of the fields there was that gleam which is like a lyric, that glowing light which is like a caress. In spite of the leaflessness of the trees, the absence of flowers, and great stretches of fallow land on every side, one felt that spring was at hand, that Nature was rising from the grave, with a smile.

Baverstock was told that he would find the ladies in the garden. He found them, however, on the cliff outside. They were sitting on one of the high-backed benches, with their faces to the sea, far beneath them a waste of dark-coloured wet sand, in the distance a rustle and a ripple of tiny waves, fiery in the light of the setting sun. The hull and funnel of a steamer stood out darkly against the horizon. A man with a horse and cart was journeying across the sand, scattering into the air the numerous seagulls in his way. The white wings of the gulls as they settled once more upon the sand flashed like snow. Every now and then the hoarse cries of these birds rose into the air and drifted towards the cliff.

Baverstock said to Lucilia, "This is not a sea to please you. It's too tame."

"It's a very good sea to look at," said Miss Roach.

"No doubt; but Miss Marston would hate to be sailing there."

"I'm watching that steamer," said Lucilia.

"We were just saying before you came up," quoth Miss Roach, "that very soon we shall see that ship swallowed up by the sun."

Lucilia rose from the bench and advanced to the edge of the cliff.

Baverstock turned quickly to Miss Roach. "I want to speak to you," he said, in a low voice.

"And I to you."

The tone of her voice frightened him.

"You had better come over to-morrow," she continued, "and stay to dinner. We'll have our talk when my niece has gone up to her room."

"Can't I speak to you to-night?"

"No; not to-night."

Lucilia turned to them. "Look!" she said, and pointed to the steamer which was disappearing in the blaze of the level sun.

"I've got letters to write," said Miss Roach; "and somebody is coming to dinner. Ride over to-morrow."

"Thank you, I will."

He got up from the bench and went to Lucilia's side.

"That steamer has quite vanished," he said, "but we shall see it emerge in a minute or two none the worse for its roasting." Then looking down the slope of the sandstone cliff: "What a dive it would be from here into thirty feet of water!" He asked her if she was fond of swimming.

"No," she replied quickly.

"I bathe winter and summer," he said; "I like it immensely."

"There are not many things I like immensely," she answered, with a perceptible rebuke in her tone. Then she turned and went back to her aunt.

Baverstock was wretched. "She doesn't love me," he said to himself; "she doesn't care two snaps of her finger for me. Good heavens, what on earth shall I do if she refuses to have anything to do with me! This is the very devil." There was a distinct, a quite unmistakable menace, he thought, in those words of Miss Roach, "And I to you." It was like a schoolmistress addressing a naughty child. Assuredly he was to be whipped on the morrow.

He was very unhappy as he rode back to his hotel.

The night came gently and tenderly. He finished

his dinner quickly, left Hans Reimer at the table, and went out to walk on the Spit. Midgley's dog accompanied him, and sat at his side when he lay down in the sand and the reeds thinking of the fate in store for him to-morrow.

When he looked up from the silvered ripple of the deep river to the host of stars sparkling through the mists of the sky, he thought to himself, "I must seem a very little creature from up there, but I've got a beast of a pain in my clockwork all the same." Then he said bitterly and sorrowfully, "When a man wants something very badly and can't get it, do what he may, that's hell." He was perfectly certain that he was to lose Lucilia.

He fondled the head of Midgley's dog, thinking of the dreariness which had come over him, and sulking in his soul against the decrees of fate. "Why the devil did I fall in love," he asked, "with a girl who doesn't take the least interest in me?"

On the following afternoon as he rode back from his work he overtook a cab close to the hotel. The driver had a big trunk at his side, and there were several smaller packages on top of the vehicle. "If only that cab contained the aunt and the niece!" he thought. He was leaning his bicycle against the balcony when the horse set foot on the shingle of the drive sending the stones flying in all

directions, but soon coming to a walk. Baverstock glanced back, and saw that the cab contained a man and a woman.

He was in the hall, receiving a welcome from Midgley's dog, when the new-comers entered. At the same moment Mr. and Mrs. Midgley appeared from their room.

The man was a cripple on crutches above the average height, spare, pale, careworn, but with an exceedingly gentle expression of face. His clothes appeared to be a size too large for him, and hung loosely on his thin body. Baverstock thought that his hair was much too long, and was inclined to find fault with the unmanly sweetness, the almost womanly tenderness of his thin pale delicate face.

He found the lady more interesting. She, too, was tall, but her body was strong and energetic. She walked with a firm carriage, a certain majesty in her aspect, the head held high, the dark eyes proud and austere. Baverstock took her to be a foreigner, and guessed that she was Spanish, thinking how fine she would look in scarlet and yellow with gold rings in her ears. "That woman," he said to himself, "is very badly mated."

The man spoke to Mrs. Midgley about rooms, and the woman, going to the table, opened the visitors' book and turned the pages. She came back

to her husband, and looking at him with meaning slightly inclined her head. Then they followed Mrs. Midgley upstairs, Trewent and the cabman entering at that moment with the big trunk.

Baverstock was just leaving for his momentous talk with Miss Roach when Reimer appeared through the gateway of the hotel.

"Going out again?" he asked, coming to a stop.

"Yes."

"I wanted to say a word to you."

"Well, there's to-morrow."

"I just wanted to apologize for my heat of the other night. I'm sorry I spoke so hot. I oughtn't to have done so."

"Oh, that's all right. I've quite forgotten it, I assure you."

"You see, Mr. Baverstock, whatever I may have come to be, I was once a lost sinner; on the other hand, whatever you may think, you are a good man. I know that. Instead of presuming to reproach you, I ought to go down on my knees and wipe the dust from your shoes."

"Good heavens, Mr. Reimer, don't talk like that, I beg you!"

"Well, you'll understand some day, perhaps, how a man *can* talk like that. But I pray God you

may never have to go through any such hell as I once knew in order to get that knowledge." He took a step forward, placed his hand on Baverstock's arm, and exclaimed: "I've been singing as I walked home! What do you think of that? Yes, sir, I've been singing, full of the knowledge that there is a forgiveness of sins."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Baverstock. "I'm sure we ought to try and be happy." Then he added, with a smile: "If you hear me singing when I come home to-night you'll know that I am happy too. I hope you will!" As he pushed off, he said: "You won't be alone at dinner to-night. Fresh arrivals!"

CHAPTER XI

THE lounge was full of people, cheerful after a good dinner. Lucilia had drunk her coffee and retired for the night. Miss Roach and Baverstock sat in a quiet corner well out of hearing, and close to an open window through which the sound of the sea came in a murmurous and just audible croon.

"Now, young man, I'm coming straight to the point," said Miss Roach, shifting her stick from her left hand to the right.

Baverstock, fresh from having said good-bye to Lucilia at the door, which he had gone to open for her, and happy because she had looked at him in that moment of farewell with what he thought to be almost kindly eyes, glanced quickly at Miss Roach and said—

"Do you know I'm afraid of you?"

For the first time he really studied the face of this old lady. He saw there, with a newness of apprehension which bewildered him, a strength, a power, an honesty masterfully superior to any of

his own qualities. He had always felt her to be masculine rather than feminine, but this feeling he had attributed to her short hair, her square shoulders, her gruff voice and the severity of the lines in her face. But now, looking into her eyes, he saw of a sudden that all these things were but the expression of an inward and spiritual power. The man was within, a man with a giant's strength.

"Afraid of me!" she laughed. "Well, you needn't be. Come, now; we won't waste time. What I've got to say to you is this: You had better stop coming over here."

"That's what I thought you'd say."

"Well?"

"And yet you say I needn't be afraid of you!"

"Listen, now. You're getting too fond of our society. If you see more of us you'll like us better still. It's wiser for you to stop now, before it hurts."

There was kindness in her eyes, but none in her voice. In spite of a look which was gentle enough, even good-humoured and friendly, the tone of the voice was emphatic, almost merciless.

"Before it hurts!" exclaimed Baverstock. A pretty girl crossed the room in front of them and looked at him as she passed, with little twitchings of her mouth and eyebrows. "Don't you think it

hurts now?" he asked. "Why, Miss Roach, I came over to tell you to-night that unless——" He stopped, looking after the girl without seeing her. "Besides, why shouldn't I come? Why should you give me marching orders? Look here, I don't want to go into hysterics, but I simply can't think of anything else except Miss Marston. It's like that. I'm head over heels in love with her. I want to have at least a chance. Don't shut the door before I've really begun to try. Why should you? It isn't fair."

The old lady's face became harder. She said to him very emphatically, "It's better for you to stop now. If you tried for a year you'd never succeed."

Baverstock became cold as ice. It was as if he had been hit. "You mean, she dislikes me?"

"Well, not that exactly. But she doesn't care about you."

"Have you asked her?"

"Yes."

"But in time she might." He felt like a man falling through leagues of air.

"Let me tell you I'm very sorry for you."

He made an impetuous movement with his hand, laying it for a moment on the strong, broad hand of Miss Roach clasped over the top of her walking-

stick. "Don't shut the door," he said; "help me instead. Help me, Miss Roach. I'm done without you."

Somebody began to play the piano in the drawing-room, and a number of people sitting in the hall at once rose and went hurriedly in that direction. Baverstock had a feeling of desertion.

"I'm afraid it's no good," said Miss Roach.

"But it's too early to throw up the sponge." How deadly cold he had gone!

"What's the use of fighting a losing battle?" demanded Miss Roach. "It's only a waste of time. And don't you see it would be worse for you at the end? Take an old woman's advice, one who likes you; don't see Lucilia again: put her out of your head."

A baritone suddenly began to sing a truculent, boastful song. There was no problem in life for that baritone.

Baverstock leaned nearer to her. "But with your help," he said, looking eagerly into her grey eyes.

"She'll never marry," said Miss Roach. "How that fellow roars! I wish he'd be quiet."

"But why?"

"I'm sure she won't."

"But why? She's only a child."

"Never mind; she'll never marry. I know her well. I've studied her. I've talked to her. Take it from me, she'll never marry."

"Do you mean——"

"Only what I've said. She'll never marry."

"But do you mean that she has had—well, what do they call it, a disappointment?"

Miss Roach met his puzzled gaze. "No," she said emphatically; "I don't mean that."

"What, then?" He began to take hope.

"Well, I'll tell you. She dislikes men. She hates the sex."

"But why?"

"So you'd better put her out of your head, better stop thinking of her. You were happy enough, I've no doubt, before you met her; and you'll be happy again as soon as you get used to not seeing her. I assure you that if you were to see her every day for a year you'd make no impression on her."

Baverstock clasped his hands and pressed them between his knees, looking ahead of him, and struggling hard to control the race in his brain. He wanted to say something that at once would express his feelings, soften the heart of this old woman, and persuade her to help him. The words danced about in his mind, and every one was useless for his purpose.

Miss Roach glanced at him. She was smiling, but her heart was troubled for him; she was profoundly sorry for this young man whose handsome face, clouded with sorrow, appealed to her maternity.

"Come," she said, looking down and beginning to draw patterns with the ferrule of her stick on the carpet; "you're a man, a brave man; you can take a thing like this without fuss, even if it does hurt."

"Oh, yes, of course, one can do that; but I'm not satisfied. I want to have a real chance."

"You don't believe me?"

"You know it isn't that."

"But I tell you she won't look at you."

"Anyhow you'll let me have a shot."

"It's just that shot I've got to prevent."

"What do you mean?"

"You mustn't speak to her."

A lady approached them. She was elderly and wore cap and shawl. "Would you mind if this window were closed?" she inquired with a beguiling smile, indicating the window with a little gesture of the hand that was not holding up the flounces of her skirt.

"Well, I should," said Miss Roach. "I like plenty of fresh air myself, and there's precious little

of it in this hotel. Still, if other people want the window shut."

"I should be so much obliged," wheedled the lady.

Miss Roach looked at her under her brows. "Do other people want it shut, or only you?" she demanded. "Well, if you go and sit over there you won't feel it. If you do I'll shut it."

The lady went off, stiff-backed, all the graciousness wiped out of her face.

Baverstock glanced at Miss Roach. "Not speak to her, did you say?"

"No."

"You mean I'm not allowed even to——"

"Listen!"

"Well?"

The song came to a vain-glorious end. There was a sound of not very certain clapping, clapping more kind than grateful.

"She's different from other girls," said Miss Roach. "Haven't you noticed that she is strange and timorous? You must have noticed that."

"Yes, but all the same——"

"Well, if you said anything to her in the nature of making love it would have a very serious effect upon her. It would throw her back. It would make her very ill. It might even——"

"Tell me?"

"Well, I will." She met his eyes, seriously and solemnly. "It might very nearly unhinge her mind."

The blood drained from Baverstock's face. "Good heavens, but why is that? What is the matter with her?"

"I can't tell you; except this: two years ago she suffered a great shock. Now, that's a secret. You mustn't speak about it. I've told you because I like you, because I'm sorry for you. Do you know that if I didn't like you, I should have taken Lucilia away without any explanation? I like you, however, and so I've told you."

"Seriously, quite seriously, Miss Roach, do you mean that there is absolutely no chance for me?"

The old lady thought for a moment. Then, with decision, she answered: "None whatever."

"But you hesitated."

"I was thinking."

"No chance whatever, no chance whatever, absolutely no chance whatever?"

"None."

"That's a knock-down blow. I rather think I'm finished. Good Lord, do you mean I've seen her for the last time in my life?"

"Take my advice; don't see her again."

"I suppose you realize that I—well, that I love her?"

"Yes."

"I must go back and think. You've hit me a stunning crack on the head. It's about the worst blow I ever had. I can't see properly, can't think properly. Just wait a minute. Let me try and collect my thoughts. This thing means, doesn't it, that Miss Marston has gone clean out of my existence?" The piano started again. "It's just as if she were dead. I'm not to see her again. I've seen her even now for the last time. And I mustn't dream of ever seeing her again because—
Let me see, what did you say?"

"Because it would be useless."

The rather sweet voice of a soprano sounded from the drawing-room.

"Ah, but something else! I remember now. Any word in the nature of love-making would throw her into an illness."

"Yes."

"Well, wait a moment. Look here. I've got an idea. Suppose I give you my word of honour never to breathe one syllable of love, never to show by the very least sign that I care about her, won't you let me come over and take you for

drives and sails, and have tea with you, and sit here talking about odds and ends?"

Miss Roach shook her head slowly and regretfully. "It would make matters worse for you, and it would also be dangerous for Lucilia."

"Does she hate me?" he demanded.

"No. But she doesn't care about you, and the society of men does her harm. She is better alone. The one chance for her is to keep her nerves quiet; her mind tranquilly employed. The least irritation is bad for her. I can tell you it has been no easy task for me these last two years. I'm the only one of the family she can put up with, and the only one also who can put up with her. No, my friend, get her out of your head. Stop before it's worse for you. She'll never marry. The very thought of marriage would either kill her or drive her mad. Now you know the truth."

Baverstock was thinking hard. "Well, I don't understand it," he said. "I wish I had a better head. What does it mean? A young girl——" Then, starting, he said, "But, look here, suppose she should get much better in health: suppose the memory of this shock should——"

"Ah, my friend, dream no dream of that kind!"

"But if it should be so?"

"Ten years, twenty years hence?" The old lady

laughed, looked full at him, and said, "You'll be a married man then, with a family, at least I hope so."

"Never! Good Lord, if you can think that you can't know how much I care for her. Why, Miss Roach, on my soul, she's absolutely everything in the world to me. She is really. Wait for her? I'd wait a thousand years. Do you know that the thought of never seeing her again is driving me crazy?"

Miss Roach nodded and shook her fine head, smiling with understanding. "It must be horrible, I know. But things like that have to be borne." She looked at him. "That's so, isn't it? It's no use crying over them. And I'll say this for you, you've taken it well, very well indeed. If I had thought you would make a scene I should never have spoken to you. It's because I respect you that I have spoken, and I have spoken as much to save you as to guard my niece. I don't want you to suffer more than is necessary. I saw you were beginning to care too much for Lucilia, and when I also saw that she did not welcome your visits—as at one time I hoped she might—I made up my mind to cut the matter short. You are hurt, and I'm sorry for you. But at least you know that there is a paramount reason why I should guard

my niece. It is a tragedy, Mr. Baverstock : a real tragedy : and I am sorry that a man like you, young, fresh and high-spirited, should have been involved in it, even for a moment. Try and forget it."

There was a sound of vigorous clapping from the drawing-room. The soprano had ceased singing.

As Baverstock raised his head and looked towards Miss Roach, a loud chord was struck upon the piano which sounded above the clapping of hands, and proclaimed the wish of the audience to hear the soprano again. One of the old ladies in the hall walked over to a vacant chair nearer to the drawing-room. She was smiling.

"You mustn't think of me," said Harry, whose face had become quite haggard and hard. "I assure you that just now I am thinking of your niece. Can't anything be done for her? Do you mean that she is really threatened by—well, by something terrible? I—can't bear to think of that." He sighed heavily. "It seems the most horrible, incredible, damnable thing. I can't grasp it. I can't believe it."

The soprano began to sing again.

Miss Roach said to Harry : "I have told you too much, and so I must tell you more. Lucilia is

not threatened by mental collapse; we are told by the best doctors that there is no reason in the world to suppose that she should ever sink into—well, madness; but we are warned, and I can see it for myself, that any shock would throw her, and for a long time, into the very serious condition that she was in two years ago—a condition of uncontrollable nervousness. I will tell you something more than this. I hoped till three days ago that you might be a means of restoring her to natural health. You seemed to me the kind of man who might re-establish her confidence and recreate her old interest in things. I was keen about you, for her sake. You didn't fawn on her, you didn't pay compliments, you didn't look at her like a goose. Well, that hope of mine has gone. And now I have to think of my duty. I must protect Lucilia. It isn't safe for you to see her. If you come over here once again I shall take her away."

Not every word reached Baverstock, for the soprano was singing loudly and the accompanist was full of enthusiasm for the score; but he heard enough to deepen his compassion for Lucilia.

"Great God!" he thought to himself. "How horrible to think that a girl so very young and so exquisitely beautiful should move about the earth in a shadow blacker than night!" He looked at

the bland and simple faces of the people in the hall, old men reading newspapers, old ladies chatting together, some busy with wool and needlework; he looked particularly at a soldier-like old gentleman who had dropped asleep in an arm-chair, with a newspaper at his feet, a cigar between the fingers of his right hand, which rested on the arm of the chair, his head fallen to one side, his shirt crumpled, his black tie working up his depressed collar; the wife of this old gentleman, who wore a lace cap, sat facing him, and every now and then she raised her eyes from her book and glanced over her spectacles at him and smiled indulgently. Baverstock thought to himself, "How have these people escaped tragedy? What have they done that life should be so easy and convenient for them?" He felt that the old man asleep in his chair was like a pig, and compared him with Hans Reimer, who talked about "the agony of life."

Miss Roach touched his arm. "I must go," she said, looking at him with kindness in her old eyes. "You must go, too. Don't think that this grief is only a cruel episode in your life. It will help you in some way. Depend upon that. There must be a meaning in it. And you've got youth on your side."

The song ended, and once more the noise of clapping hands came beating into the hall.

Baverstock said to her, "When you go it will be awful. While you are here I feel that there is just a half-chance."

"No; there is no half-chance," she said, beginning to get up from her chair. "Let's be sensible."

He rose quickly, helping her to her feet.

She stood before him leaning on her stick, all the sorrows and sufferings, the whole epic of her long, kind, beautiful, unselfish life written in her worn face, which the very finest courage had made masculine, and rational deep-thinking love had rendered strangely gentle.

"Well?" she said, and smiled at him.

He thought to himself: "This woman is about the finest creature I have ever seen. What depths there are in her face! What she must know, what she must bear!" And it struck him for the first time that the lameness which he had always accepted as part of her, like her grey hair and her wrinkled skin, must cause her pain and must sometimes irk her vigorous mind. Simultaneously with this thought rose the reflection, "She is on my side!" He said to her—

"You believe, don't you, that I love your niece?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"You don't want me to protest and rave?"

"Certainly not: not in the least: no, no, on no account!"

"Well, I do love her. And just now I feel that it would be considerably easier for me to die than to live without the least hope of ever seeing her again."

The pianist began to play, very softly and sorrowfully.

"Will you, then," continued Harry, "do me a friend's turn? Will you still try to make her feel an interest in me, and will you sometimes send me a line to tell me about her?"

"Don't you think it would be much wiser to give the whole thing up as a bad job?"

"No."

"Well, I do. Still, I'll do what you ask. Yes, I don't mind doing that." She steadied herself with her left hand on the back of a chair, holding her stick in it, and put out her right, blankly like a man. "I'm afraid this is good-bye."

The sound of a violin very gently rose above the notes of the piano, and came sighing into the hall like the passing of many spirits in grief.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Roach, with sudden amusement; "that violin makes me feel as if I were in a theatre and on the stage! What a tragic

thing they're playing." Then she said to him: "I think you're a brave and a good man. I am very glad we've met. And I'm very much obliged to you for the way you've taken it. Good-night to you."

He walked behind her, and at the door went forward to open it for her. She did not look up as she hobbled through, but again wished him good-night, this time without intimate significance.

"You won't forget, will you?" he asked, coming into the corridor.

"No, I won't forget," she answered.

He heard her say to the lift-boy, "Now, young shaver, not too fast, remember."

The shutting of the lattice-door jarred upon his soul.

He took his cap and went out of the door, following the garden-path towards the cliff. The night-air, the gloom, the silence and the sense of space was like a new world. As he went he began to fill his pipe. In one of the arbours he stopped and lighted it. At the gate opening on to the cliff, which struck wetly to his hand, he thought to himself, "Hullo, I'm smoking!"

The wind was off the land; it was soft, moist, friendly. A brilliant moon stippled the whole surface of the sea, shining like phosphorus upon

the leaden ridges and making the curve of the small waves, just before they broke, glow like polished silver. The sound of these breaking waves, bringing with them the sense of the incoming tide, was the only sound on the cliffs. The wind did not stir the lightest bushes in the garden.

Baverstock walked to the bench where he had sat with Lucilia and Miss Roach; he leaned his arms along the high back, rested his chin upon his crossed hands, one of his fingers crooked over the stem of his pipe, and looked at the sea, smoking faster than was his wont.

Life had suddenly lost its movement. Everything seemed to be standing still. Existence was arrested.

This young engineer, whose affections ever since he could remember anything had been given to machinery, found himself confronted by a piece of mechanism that had suddenly stopped going.

Existence had never once checked for him before this. From the time when he could observe, reflect and hope, the wheels of to-day had interacted quite smoothly with the wheels of to-morrow; life had moved, gathering good speed, exciting new thoughts, creating fresh and more satisfactory ideas. Something was always going to happen.

But the thing had stopped. There was now not a wheel that turned.

To be so powerless before this mechanism seemed to crush him. He felt himself not only pitifully weak, but incredibly ignorant, stupid to the point of rebuke and laughter. The pride of his life dropped away from him. He had nothing to say. He was conscious within himself of depth after depth of bottomless ignorance. What a coxcomb he must have been! How men must have spoken about him! He knew nothing at all; and he had talked as if he held the keys of everything!

Well, he was a worm now. He knew that. A broken worm, not able even to crawl.

He straightened himself up and jerked the ashes from his pipe with a quick movement of his wrist. A tear trickled out of his eye and rolled on to his cheek.

"Good Lord," he said, "I've been crying."

He turned round.

The outline of the hotel with its slate roof, mansard windows and clusters of tall chimneys, was as visible as if it was day. Above the garden hedge, and over the bushes and trees, he looked at dark windows rimmed by light and glaring windows where the blinds had not been drawn. The machinery of existence at once began to move.

Life, he saw, was still in motion. But it moved for other people. He felt that he was now an alien; one who looked on; one for whom life had neither occupation nor concern. He was no longer in the midst of things.

An intolerable sensation of loneliness took possession of him.

Why had the world suddenly cast him out from its pleasures and its dreams and its brightness?

He stood with his back to the glitter of the ridged and moving sea, looking at the lights in the hotel and feeling like a son disowned by his father in whose ears the echoes of the closed door is still resounding.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "if one of those windows is her window." And at that—thinking of her great beauty and the darkness that overshadowed her—it was as if a spear had pierced his heart. Tears rose very slowly to his eyes; for a moment his lips quivered; he exclaimed aloud: "O Lord, how I love that girl!"

CHAPTER XII

It was nearly midnight when he arrived back at the Sandspit Hotel.

When he had put his bicycle away and locked up the shed, he walked across the drive to the wall and stood between two tamarisks looking at the moonlit sea, which was now at the full and moved almost without a whisper.

His dejection had passed; he was thinking what he might do to mend matters.

The bushes, the wall, the rocks, the whole sea were extraordinarily bright and vivid, but the opposite shore and the wooded hill of Swanscombe were dim, veiled with mist which was like the exhalation of a living creature. The air was colder; there was a stir of wind among the tamarisks. Every now and then a sigh passed through the clear spaces between the sea and the stars.

Baverstock, lost in thought, stood between the feathery bushes, which uttered a faint sound, and as he glanced across the flooding sea to the argent

rim of the horizon, he quietly, mechanically, unconsciously tapped on the wall with the key in his hand, thinking how he could save Lucilla from the darkness which threatened her.

Suddenly he heard a noise behind him and above him. He came out of his muse and turned about, glancing upward.

Reimer's window showed a light behind the brown holland blind. The rest of the hotel was in darkness.

Baverstock thought to himself, "I haven't come home singing!"

Then it occurred to him that the noise which he had heard was like a groan, and he wondered if Reimer was on his knees agonizing for past sins.

"As if they care about us!" he reflected, looking up at the stars.

He brushed past the bushes, thinking to himself, "Well, I don't feel like sleep, and I certainly shan't join that old fellow in his prayers, melancholy as I am myself; still I had better go to bed." The noise in Reimer's room had fallen like a stone into the calm sea, sending ripples through the soul of Baverstock and scattering his thoughts.

Midgley always left the key for him between the bars of a boot-scraper. He placed the key of the

shed in his left hand, stooped down, and without looking for it found the key of the door.

As he let himself in the tic-tac of the clock came to his ears like an old friend who had been sitting up to welcome him; but at the same moment he heard a noise from the corridor above which roused his attention.

"I hope old Reimer isn't going to catechize me," he thought, closing the door with extreme caution. The beauty and the sweetness of the night were shut out. The heavy atmosphere of the house closed in upon him with the darkness. He put the key in the lock, turned it, and went tip-toe across the hall so as not to waken anybody. Then he struck a match and lighted his candle.

He sat down, with the key of the shed in his lap, to take off his leggings and remove his boots before mounting the stairs, which always creaked alarmingly under the lightest tread. The tic-tac of the clock resumed its place in his attention. He remembered that there were new people in the hotel. The image of the long-haired man on crutches recurred to his mind.

Another sound from above made him stop. It was the quiet and secretive noise of a door opening very slowly. To his surprise Baverstock found his heart beating uneasily. It seemed as if a ripple of

horror flowed up to him and passed over his feet, striking coldly.

He picked up his candle, went on t. . . toe to the foot of the stairs, and looked upward.

A light was moving in the darkness, growing brighter.

"That must be Reimer's door," he thought.

At the next moment he saw a candle coming from the doorway, then the shoulder of some one in red, then the face and neck of a woman. He started with amazement, recognizing the wife of the man with the long hair, the woman who had seemed to him like a Spaniard.

She came to the banister, lifted her candle above her head, and looked down.

Baverstock, whose candle had attracted her, advanced a step, still staring at her. For a moment they remained in that position, the two candles holding the darkness asunder, his eyes staring up, her eyes looking down. Then he inquired in a whisper, "Is anything wrong?" The feeling of horror at his feet began to mount upward. The extreme pallor of the woman and the glitter of her dark eyes filled him with misgiving. As he stared at her he saw something on her face and on her hands which made him go deadly cold. Horror mounted to his breast. He sprang up the stairs,

and came face to face with the woman at the top, his heart beating, a sensation of ice pressing upon the back of his head.

"What have you done?" he asked.

She answered, "Go in and look."

His eyes had grown hard with judgment. His brain was alert. But suddenly he felt afraid of her, and quailed, recoiling a step.

"You have killed him," he said, and advanced again.

She moved aside to let him pass, and Baverstock, casting upon her pale and suffering face a look of amazement, rushed past her, the candle shaking in his hand, and entered Reimer's room.

He knew that she had killed him, and he had a dim feeling that he was caught into the machinery of a crime, and must do something that was practical and essential, at once, without stopping to think. But the thought uppermost in his mind as he hastened towards the door was concerned with the face of this woman, the flesh heavy with suffering, the dark eyes glittering with some fearful pleasure that was unafraid, the mouth sorrowful but resigned.

Then he saw the dead man's dust-covered shoes lying at the side of the open door, waiting for Trewent to come round in the early morning. The

sight of them instantly recalled Reimer to his mind, not as a dead man, but wrapped about in that old snuff-coloured cloak and stooping his head against the wind as he marched along the Spit.

He thought to himself, "I have got to look upon his dead body."

Then he entered the room.

Suddenly it seemed as if an iron bar hit him a merciless blow at the back of the knees. His bones melted. He uttered a hoarse cry. By an effort he managed to reach a wardrobe close to the door, and fell against it, breathing like a man who has run a long race. The sweat was pouring from his whole body. The waters of horror rose with a rush and overwhelmed him.

The sight which had almost robbed him of power was indescribably gruesome.

It was not murder, but revenge, and the revenge of madness.

He closed his eyes, fighting for his breath, fighting for mastery, and through all this struggle fighting for courage to open them again.

Again and again he was shaken by a violent convulsion. His body seemed to be saturated with a most deadly nausea. He kept groaning aloud. He was stifling. He was swooning. He was falling. Somebody's hands were crushing his lungs

together, and the whole sea was roaring through the chambers of his brain.

He was thinking of himself. His own life seemed to be streaming out of him. He fought for breath, straightened himself, half opened his eyes, and cried, "My God, my God!"—clutching at his consciousness.

Then he suddenly thought, "I must face that woman again!" and this seemed to him more impossible than to look at the ghastly havoc of the room.

The draught from the door stirred the curtains and rattled the blind, which pressed into the space of the open window. The flame of his guttering candle was blown forward. He was aware of these things quite clearly, and he had the feeling, "I must go out and close the door." He drew his candle nearer to his body to protect the flame.

He saw something at which he could look without horror. It was a large photograph of the child whose likeness Reimer carried in his letter-case, a large photograph in a gilt frame standing on a little table beside the disordered bed. Then he saw, hanging from a hook on the wall, Reimer's brown cloak. He had an irrational feeling for the moment that Reimer was his friend, and that he must do something to avenge him.

"I am afraid of that woman," he thought, and wondered what he should say to her.

One thing he knew now, and it comforted him—he was regaining the mastery over his faculties.

He thought to himself, "I shall have to rouse Midgley. Somebody must go into Sandtown for a policeman. There'll be a trial. I shall be let in for that. I shall have to appear in court."

But first of all he must turn round and leave this dreadful room and say something to the woman who was waiting for him outside. What on earth should he say to her?

Of a sudden it flashed into his mind that she might pull the door to, turn the key in the lock, and leave him there with the dead man.

He started round.

She was standing in the corridor watching him, the candlestick at her waist.

He stood between the window and the door, looking at her.

With a slight movement of her head she beckoned him to come out to her, and he obeyed without knowing why and without considering what he should say to her. He did not know that his eyes were fearfully enlarged by horror.

When he was in the corridor she approached a step and said to him, "He was a devil, that man."

"All the same——" he began; and then, stopping, he said, "Let's shut the door, anyhow," and turned round, closing Reimer's door. He saw the dust-covered shoes again, and he thought to himself, "Perhaps they'll be part of the evidence, those old shoes of Reimer's; I wonder how many miles he walked in them." And he remembered detective stories he had read in which dust helped to bring home a murder.

The woman came nearer to him. "I want you to follow me a moment," she said quietly, speaking in a passionless monotone. "You're one of the people stopping here, aren't you? The engineer they told me about?"

"Yes."

"Follow me a moment."

Baverstock stopped her. "Look here," he said, "I've got to do something. You have killed that man in there." And he felt as he said these words, even with the evidence of her dreadful crime upon her, that it was absurd to think this woman had really murdered a man.

She turned her head. "Come with me for a moment. You'll be able to clear things."

It was astonishing how calm he felt. This frightful crime was over; something else had succeeded. Instead of horror for the dead, he was

conscious of curiosity in the living. Who was this woman? What had brought her here? Why had she committed this murder?

Reimer's existence had suddenly been blotted out. And this blotting out of a man had made no real difference to the flow of life. The house was asleep. The ticking of the clock could be heard in the hall. The sea outside was standing at the full, waiting to turn its face from the land. The stars were vibrating in the vast calm spaces of the night without a shudder. The night was still beautiful and sweet. And he himself, still among the living things of the earth, was curious about this other living thing who looked back at him and asked him to follow.

It would be the same to-morrow. No one would care that Reimer had ceased to be a moving creature with a will of his own and eyes in his head to look about him. There would be hubbub and tumult, but the interest would fasten upon this woman.

She would be tried by a judge and jury; and the judge, the counsel and the jury would look at her, think about her, be profoundly interested in her; and then they would order her to be hanged, and she, too, would cease to interest the world.

He thought to himself, "She is doomed to die. In a few weeks she'll know what it is to go out." And he felt, if not sorrow for her, a sudden access of fresh interest. She was living now, but every day was numbered for her. In a very little time her body would be hidden under the surface of the earth. Things would go on, the things of this living present, but she would be as distant from them as Lot's wife, Boadicea, or Joan of Arc.

She stopped at a door towards the end of the corridor, which was closed but not shut, and waited there for a moment, listening. Then she beckoned Baverstock to approach, and when he was quite close to her, she drew aside, motioned him to stand where she had been standing, and said—

"Listen! He's breathing. I want you to hear."

He listened. A man's breathing came to him, the quiet, measured breathing of a sleeper. He looked up at the woman, nodded his head, and asked, "Who is it?"

"My husband."

She put out her hand, and very gently pushed open the door.

"Come and look," she said, going in before him. He followed her, and the two candles lighted

up in wavering lines a room that made him think of steamers, trains, railway stations and cabs. He saw a large trunk open against the wall, a portmanteau open at the foot of the bed, some hat-boxes beside the dressing-table in the window, and a canvas hold-all sprawling on the floor just inside the door, its contents partially disarranged as though some one had endeavoured to get at a particular garment without disturbing the rest of the things in its pockets with their webbing straps and bright buckles.

He observed a great number of labels on the sides of the trunk and the portmanteau—steamship labels, railway labels and hotel labels.

On the right of the room was the bed, and a man lay there sleeping with his face towards the window, away from the door. Two ebony crutches leaned against the wall.

There was a fire burning in the grate, and the hearthrug was littered with boots, shoes, slippers and newspapers. A travelling clock in a leather case stood on the mantelpiece.

The woman said to him, "Just come a minute, and see for yourself."

She made her way through the luggage to the further side of the bed, and Baverstock followed her, not like a man in a dream, but like a man of

weak will who grudgingly obeys the command of a more masterful spirit.

"Look," she said in a low voice; "he is really asleep."

"Yes, he is asleep," said Baverstock.

"You are sure of that? You can see that he is not pretending?"

"No; he is really asleep."

"Very well."

She moved away, and Baverstock went ahead of her towards the door.

He thought to himself, "Now I must go and wake Midgley. There'll be a tremendous scene. I wonder what will happen."

The clock in the hall checked its tic-tac, there was a dull whirring sound, and then the first stroke of midnight sent metallic vibrations beating through the house.

The woman touched his arm, and he started. When he turned it frightened him for a moment to see how close she was to him—her face was so near that he could feel her breath.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, holding her candle aside.

"I must wake the proprietor," he answered, drawing back a little.

"Yes, I suppose so. And after?"

"Well, some one must go for the police."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"I thought that would come in the morning."

"No; it must be to-night."

She thought for a moment.

"You can tell them," she said, regarding him closely, and making a slight backward gesture with her head, "that he was asleep. He had nothing to do with it. They won't have to take him. And when they've taken me, you might come and sit with him. He'll be distracted. Tell him that it had to be, and help him to manage things. He's like a child. Will you do that?"

"Yes, I'll do what I can."

It occurred to Baverstock that there was some formula with which policemen address people charged with a crime, and though he could not recollect the words he remembered that they were a caution, and said to the woman, "You'd better not say anything more to me. I mean about what you've done. I shall be a witness, and they'll ask me. You'll have a lawyer, and he'll tell you what to do."

"I'm not afraid," she answered.

He could not prevent himself from feeling that to go and wake Midgley and send for a policeman

was the action of a coward. Guilty as this woman might be, it was horribly unchivalrous to leave her for this purpose. He became very poignantly ashamed and could not look at her. Had he had a murderer to deal with, no doubt he would have sprung upon him and made him a prisoner with almost savage roughness. But this was a woman—a woman not only handsome, but with something superb and majestic about her. He lowered his eyes, and began to edge away from her, feeling small and mean and traitorous.

"I must go," he said.

"Yes; but let the thing be done quietly," she replied.

He turned and looked at her.

"I mean, don't wake everybody in the house. The proprietor by himself—that will do, won't it? I'm quite ready to go from here without any fuss. If there's noise, he'll wake, and it will be bad for him—the shock."

"I see. Yes, I'll do what I can. In a way, you know, I'm very sorry for you."

"You need not be."

"I wish to God this hadn't fallen to me," he said bitterly.

"Oh, that's nothing. You're only a wheel."

At that moment the man stirred in the bed, and

she put her finger to her lip, motioning Baverstock to go quietly from the room.

As he went down the corridor he heard the man utter an exclamation, and then the woman's voice, speaking soothingly, came to his ears.

The flame of his candle threw fringes of light on Reimer's shoes, and he shuddered as he passed that closed door, thinking of what was within. The living woman escaped from his consciousness, and he was absorbed into the woful carnage on the other side of the wall.

His feeling of nausea returned. He was overtaken by giddiness, and a violent convulsion shook him from head to foot. He thought that he must vomit, and hurried forward, seeking his own room.

He stood by his bed for a moment, drenched with perspiration and overcome by this feeling of sickness. Then he became aware that he was still holding the key of the shed in his left hand. He looked at it for a moment, and remembered the tamarisks, the stone wall, the moonlight on the full sea, the mist veiling the cliffs across the bay, and the scents and silence of the night.

"Thank God, Lucilia is not here," he thought to himself, and dropping the key on the bed, turned and made his way from the room.

He was now in command of his faculties. He walked quietly along the corridor considering how he should wake Midgley without disturbing the house. The room was at the extreme end of the corridor, round a turning, and opposite the bath-room.

"I must write to Miss Roach," he said to himself, "and warn her to take Lucilia away from the neighbourhood before this thing comes out." He began to think how he might telegraph the news, framing different messages as he went along, even counting the words.

At the door of the Midgleys' room he stopped to think. A low growl came to his ears.

He whispered the dog's name, and a sharp, menacing bark announced him. He heard Midgley's voice saying sleepily, "Lie down, Jack."

He tapped on the panel of the door.

The dog sprang at it, barking.

Baverstock opened the door an inch, and said, "Quiet, Jack, quiet." Adding, "Mr. Midgley, I want to speak to you for a moment."

The dog snuffed at the opening, whining, and pawing to get out.

The voices of Midgley and his wife came to Baverstock's ears.

"Just a minute, Mr. Midgley," he said. "I'm sorry to disturb you."

Midgley came to the door and put his head round the corner. "What's the matter?" he asked sleepily.

Baverstock could not prevent a feeling of amusement from taking sudden possession of his mind. Midgley reminded him of pictures he had seen in old volumes of *Punch* , pictures by Leech and Keene; there was something stupid and banal in the red, farmer-like face of this man with its tousled hair and beard looking at him with blinking eyes round the corner of the door.

"Come out here a moment," said Baverstock, moving backwards.

The proprietor obeyed sulkily.

"What's the matter?" called Mrs. Midgley from the bed.

"I'm going to find out," said her husband, closing the door.

The dog ran forward to the corridor, but Baverstock made a grab at its collar, and dragged it with him into the bathroom. The dog was uneasy, and began to whine.

"Shut the door," said Baverstock.

"My word, it's cold in here," said Midgley.

"What's up, Mr. Baverstock? Why, it's past midnight, isn't it?"

Baverstock said, "Something terrible has happened, but it's of no use to make a row now. Only you've got to do something at once. You can do it without disturbing Mrs. Midgley or the servants. Lie down, Jack! Stop your noise."

"Something terrible happened! What do you mean?" Midgley came nearer to him, fingering at the button of his nightshirt. "You don't tell me that old Reimer——" He paused, open-mouthed, his eyes staring, shivering with cold.

"Yes, it's to do with him."

"What? Not suicide?"

"No."

Baverstock felt all his horror leaving him as he studied the stupid face of Midgley. Something strong and slightly contemptuous strengthened his mind. He was like a man taking command of a desperate situation.

"Tell us, Mr. Baverstock. What is it? Don't keep me out of bed longer than you can help. Lor, it's like an ice-house in here."

Baverstock took a blanket that was used as a bath-mat and threw it over Midgley's shoulders.

"Well, don't jump," he said; "but Reimer's dead. He's been killed."

Midgley made a step towards him. "What the devil's this?" he said loudly. "Killed! You don't ask me to believe that! Killed! What, in my house? Killed here? No, not at all! Who has been——"

"Listen, Mr. Midgley. We don't want to scare people before it's necessary. Reimer is dead. The lady who arrived to-day has killed him. I've seen him, and I've seen her——"

"Never!"

"And what you've got to do——"

"Never, I say!"

"Is to dress yourself and go for a policeman."

"Murder! What, murder in this house? The lady, you say? Why, you're mad or dreaming. Murder! I never heard of such a thing. Who saw it? What makes you—— Mr. Baverstock, I——"

Baverstock said to him quietly and emphatically, "Come, man, summon your wits. You've got to deal with this thing. You're in charge. It's no use making a row. Just think a moment, and act like a sensible man. Reimer's dead. The woman is now waiting to be arrested. It's some matter of revenge. That's clear enough. She isn't afraid, and she isn't sorry. She's just waiting."

Midgley interrupted him. "You mean it's really true?"

"Yes, it's true."

"Then I'm ruined!"

He jerked up his head, his face expressing nothing but anger and vexation, and exclaimed, "I must tell my wife. We're ruined. We're done. I wouldn't have had such a thing happen not for a thousand pounds, I wouldn't."

Baverstock caught his arm. "Don't wake your wife," he said sternly; "she's probably asleep again by now; it might drive her mad. Wait till morning. Let's get the worst over by ourselves."

"She shall know now," answered Midgley indignantly. "Do you think I'll keep a thing like this from her? Murder! God in heaven, to think of it! Murder in my house!"

Baverstock said to him, "You make me sick."

"Do I? Ah! no doubt. But it's nothing to you, you see."

"Come, man; I make one more appeal to you. Get hold of yourself. Act like a decent fellow. Handle this thing so that you won't be ashamed afterwards. You'll have to give evidence. Remember that. You don't want to look like a coward and a fool in the witness-box, do you?"

Midgley stopped.

Baverstock could see in his coarse face the movement of a new thought through his mind. He was pleased at the sensation of getting hold of something which had been slipping away from him.

"You don't want to fill the house with screaming women at this time of night," he said. "What you've got to do is to take hold of the situation and govern it."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, get some clothes on quietly, and go into Sandtown for the policeman. Then, when the woman is arrested, you and I can decide together how we shall break the news in the morning."

"My clothes are in the bedroom."

"I can lend you some."

"All right."

"Take the dog with you."

"All right."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

Baverstock opened the door, and, holding Jack by the collar, led the way into the corridor.

When they were in the room, Midgley said to him, "Do you think I'd better take a look at the body?"

"No, I'm quite sure you'd better not."

"Mr. Baverstock, this is my ruin."

"I don't think so."

"Ah, but I do. This house is a ruined house. It's done for. I shall lose everything I've got in the world."

"We'll talk of that to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN he had got rid of Midgley, Baverstock returned to the corridor. He was walking in the direction of his room, when the woman opened her door and came out.

He turned and saw that she was dressed in a long ulster with a scarf tied over her head.

She beckoned to him, closing her bedroom door.

As he went towards her he reflected that she might be planning to escape, and considered what he should do.

She said to him: "I'll wait downstairs for what's to follow; but I want you to sit with my husband."

"To sit with your husband!"

"Yes, he's upset; you'll help him to bear the strain. It's better I should go. Shall I take you in, or will you go by yourself? I've told him about you."

"But I think you must wait here."

She looked at him with scorn. "You mean that I want to escape?"

"Well, my duty is to be with you, till——"

"Do you think I am a criminal?"

"You know what you've done."

"And thank God for it, if there is a God."

"Well?"

"I'm not a criminal."

"I don't say you are; but what you have done is a crime."

"No it is not!"

"Well, in the eyes of the law——"

"The law! Are you proud of human law? But, that's enough. Come, I'll give you my word. I promise not to escape. Now, go to my husband. Sit with him, and help him to bear the future. He's innocent. You know that. I'll wait downstairs. Listen. I wouldn't escape for all this world can give me. My trial is what I long for. I've nothing else on this earth to live for. Do you know what I mean? Well, my husband will explain to you. He'll tell you the story."

"Why can't you come in then, and wait?"

"I frighten him; and the police coming, that would be bad for him. My husband's like a child."

"Well, I'll do what you ask. You'd better take this candle. There's no light in the hall."

"I thought of going out, and waiting at the gate. Do you object to that?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I'll sit in the hall."

He looked at her, and said, "Do what you like. I'm sorry for you. I wish I——"

"Pray don't be sorry."

"Well, I'll go to your husband."

He gave her the candle. As she took it from him with her left hand, she raised her right and placed a cigarette which she had been holding in the palm between her lips, lighting it at the candle.

This action amazed him.

She noticed his surprise, and said, "The last !"—but without a smile, without emotion.

Then, with the smoke drifting from her face, she said to him, "Try and make it easy for my husband. I mean, tell him how the law deals with things of this kind. It won't be a long affair, will it?—and I shall be taken decent care of. Tell him that. And don't let him know I've gone."

Baverstock said, "All right," looking at her, and seeing for the first time something of tenderness in her proud face.

She said to him, "You've sent for the police, I take it?"

"Yes."

"Whom have you sent?"

"The proprietor of the place."

"I'm glad you haven't aroused the whole house. How long will they be?"

"Nearly an hour."

"As long as that!"

"It's more than a mile from here."

"Well, I'll look at the sea."

She nodded her head. "Good-night," she said, and walked towards the stairs. Then she stopped and held up her candle. "Can you see?" she asked. "I'll wait till you get to the door."

"Good-night," he said, and went forward, not thinking how he could prevent her from escaping, but wishing that he could do something to help her.

CHAPTER XIV

THIS sensation of active pity accompanied Baverstock to the door of the bedroom. As he put his fingers to the handle, he looked back at the woman, meaning to convey to her by this action his sympathy and his good-will; but just at that moment she turned away to the stairs, so that she missed his compassion, and so that he saw nothing of her face. The candle-light moved out of his vision, leaving darkness behind it. The solitude of the woman as she passed out of his sight seemed to him like the unreachable solitude of a ghost.

His thoughts were still with the woman, and his gaze was still directed through the darkness towards the stairs, as he opened the door a few inches and inquired mechanically whether he might enter. A faint light flickered up from the invisible stairs and jerked across the ceiling of the corridor, chased by shadows and almost immediately overwhelmed by darkness. A sound of the creaking of stairs reached him, and at that moment a voice from

inside the room, so close to him that it made him start, invited him to enter.

The man was standing between the bed and the fire, resting on his crutches and facing towards the door. He was dressed in a long gown made of coarse white blanket with a black cord round the waist, the collar turned up round the neck, the sleeves rolled back from the wrists. His hair was disordered, but there was nothing in his appearance which suggested the untidiness or the alarm of Midgley. On the contrary, Baverstock was immediately struck by the man's composure. His first thought as he came face to face with this stranger was one of perplexity. He said to himself, "What does she mean by saying that this man is a child?" He was conscious within himself of a lesser strength, a weaker self-command, a distinct inferiority of will and character. It seemed to him an act of presumption to offer his services to a man so visibly and so powerfully his superior.

The beauty of the stranger's face did not at once appeal to his admiration. It was only when he had recovered himself from the shock of the man's unnatural self-possession that he perceived qualities in his countenance which gave him pleasure to observe. There was a most compelling benignity in his expression, a gentleness which proceeded

from the depths of the spirit, a kindness whose history reached far back into the earliest years of his pain and suffering, a courtesy of soul which was manifestly the very breath of his existence. Baverstock could see in the deep lines running from the nostrils, past the corners of the gentle mouth, down almost to the base of the chin, the grooving of pain: in the fine lines crossing the forehead he could see the long legend of effort and strain; but in the calm eyes set deep in the head, eyes of grey with dark lashes and dark eyebrows, and in the exceeding sweetness of the lips, he saw the smile of a spirit which had endured pain without bitterness and sorrow without despair. How there was strength in this gentle, feminine face he could not determine; but he felt that the sweetness of its expression came from some ultimate stronghold of the will whose foundations were fastened upon rock.

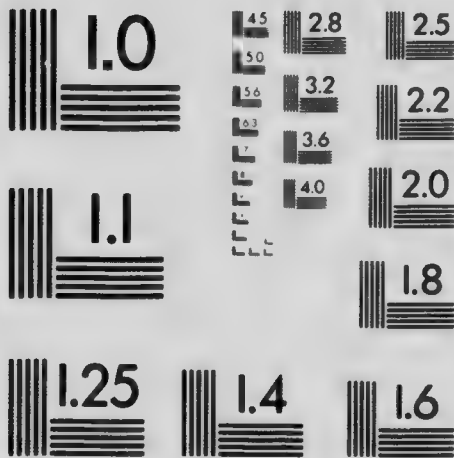
As he entered the room, closing the door behind him the man stood watching him, holding out his hand. And when Baverstock gave his hand, the man held it, looking into his face as though studying it, and for a moment saying nothing. Then in a very gentle voice, still holding his hand, and still studying his face, he said to Baverstock—

"How kind of you to come and help me."



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Without releasing his hand and without removing his gaze from Baverstock's face, he added more slowly, "I am so sorry that you should be involved in this tragedy. You are too young for such violence, for such distress. And I think you are even younger than your years. Life has been pleasant for you."

Baverstock said to him, "I am very sorry for your wife, and I am very sorry for you. If I can do anything to help you, I will, gladly."

The man released his hand, and shuffling forward a pace or two cleared some articles of clothing out of an arm-chair beside the fire. Then, turning his head and once more looking at Baverstock very closely, he said, "If you are willing to help me, if you are quite sure that you do not shrink from closer acquaintance with this tragedy, will you sit down while I tell you how it has come about?"

He moved away on his crutches towards the bed. Baverstock advanced to the chair, but before sitting down he loosened his jacket, and asked if he might take off his cycle garments, as the room was hot. The stranger, sitting down on the edge of the tumbled bed, his two crutches held in his left hand, his right hand resting on his knees, watched Baverstock, but now without closeness of scrutiny as though meditating what he should say.

When Baverstock had taken off his outer things he felt ashamed of his evening dress, and sat down in the arm-chair—which he pushed farther back from the fire—with an uncomfortable sensation of self-consciousness.

The stranger said to him, "Although my wife will acknowledge that she has assassinated Hans Reimer, she ought to be defended by a lawyer. She has been taken away, and she tells me I am not allowed to go with her; but perhaps I can be of more use to her in arranging for the defence. There is a defence. She has not committed a murder. Perhaps you will help me by recommending a lawyer whom I can perfectly trust with this grave, this sorrowful business. I know nothing of the neighbourhood and nothing of its people. Is there a lawyer close at hand who could come to me early to-morrow morning?"

Baverstock found himself no longer wondering at the man's composure, but gradually himself becoming calm and self-possessed. He had forgotten the lonely woman waiting in the night for arrest; he had forgotten, too, the horrible thing he had seen but a few minutes ago in the room where Reimer had agonized in prayer and walked for hours tortured by the possibility of sins beyond the limits of Divine forgiveness. He was not conscious

even of disturbance in the society of this man whose name he did not know, whose history was a blank to him, about whose character he could say nothing. It was as if the murder had taken place months ago, as if the woman had gone with her candle down the stairs weeks ago, and as if he had been sitting with this stranger for a whole day.

It seemed to him, too, that he had long been familiar with this room. The fire had always been smouldering in the grate; the red curtains had always been drawn over the windows; the lamp had always been burning on the dressing-table. It seemed to him, too, that he had taken long journeys with these trunks and boxes strewn over the floor, whose labels were old acquaintances, whose straps he had often buckled. A longing came over him for his pipe. He wanted to smoke, to cross his legs, to settle himself more comfortably in his chair. The feeling of nervousness, the earlier feeling of horror, had gone entirely; reaction had come, but reaction which found him quiet and self-possessed, disposed to conversation.

"There is nobody in Sandtown who would be of any use in such a case," he replied; "but I know a solicitor in Baskerton, a man named Crickmay, who has done some work for my firm, and is a really

clever, straight man of business. If you like I will ride there early in the morning and bring him over."

"That is kind of you."

"Perhaps it would be better if you could tell me the main lines of defence so that I could report to Crickmay. He would be able to think things over before his arrival. In fact, he could go straight to your wife before the legal proceedings take place. There won't be much time."

"I was thinking of that."

"At present I know nothing."

"I know."

"All the same, if you would rather not tell me I shall understand. I could get Crickmay over here by ten o'clock, perhaps nine."

"There is no reason why I should not tell you. On the contrary, I am most grateful to you for your willingness to hear the story of this—of this sad, and to me most disappointing catastrophe. Disappointing! You will not understand what I mean by that word. Let me explain to you, then, at the outset, that my wife—— But may I ask you a question first of all? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins?"

Baverstock started. "Why," he exclaimed, "that is what Reimer was always asking me!"

The stranger expressed no surprise. He said quietly, "But he did not mean the same thing."

Baverstock said, "He was haunted by something in his past, I think. It seemed to me that he wanted to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and tried to persuade himself it was a reality by converting other people to his view."

"But I mean the duty, the human duty, of forgiving those who trespass against us."

Baverstock was perplexed for a moment, but perceiving suddenly what the man meant, exclaimed, "Oh, I see, that forgiveness. He never spoke of that to me."

"But," asked the stranger, "do you believe in it? Do you believe that it is our duty to forgive those who sin against us?"

"Yes, I believe it is a duty, but I think it is a hard one, almost a counsel of perfection."

The stranger shook his head. "Ah!" he said quietly, "it is just because people think that forgiveness is a counsel of perfection that life is so imperfect. Everything hangs upon that. It is the keystone. Self-assertion, self-consequence, self-seeking, these are the obstacles. Humanity must empty itself of all anger, all vindictiveness, all revenge, all sense of its *rights*, before the Kingdom can come. But I must not speak of that. I only

asked you if you believed in the necessity of this duty laid upon us by Christ that I might explain to you what I meant by saying that this dreadful catastrophe is a disappointment to me. Let me proceed from that point. I thought till a few minutes ago that I had persuaded my wife to believe with me in the forgiveness of sins. For six months I have lived in that belief. We came to Europe at my wife's own desire that we might find Reimer, knowing that he was tortured by remorse, and tell him that we forgave him. It was her idea. Last night my wife said to me, 'Our journey is at an end; to-morrow he will know that I forgive him.' And a few minutes ago she was standing beside me saying, 'I have killed him.' To me, then, his death is terrible, but more terrible the disappointment that my wife—I do not say it in judgment, or to exculpate myself—deceived me. I thought she had come at last to know the heart of Christ's secret."

Baverstock began dimly to understand what the woman had meant by calling this man a child. The feeling that he was in the presence of a stronger man had gone; he thought to himself, "Here is another man to whom religion has become an obsession." He studied the man's face with compassion, and thought he saw there

the weakness of a temperament that dwelt in cloudland.

"Well," he said, shifting in his chair, "at least you are able to bear this calamity with composure."

The stranger regarded him, scrutinized him, with attention. "Are you surprised," he asked, "that I am not overwhelmed?" Then, still looking at him, but without the strain of scrutiny, he added, "It must surprise you. Yes, you must be puzzled that I should be apparently so unmoved by this dreadful thing. But you will understand why I can face even so great a calamity as this without tears and without excitement when I tell you the history which has culminated in to-night's violent and sudden death."

He paused, thinking, and then said, slowly and with a tone of apology, "There was a time in my life when I wept before disaster and when I raved in the desolation of tragedy; but now I have learned that there are just two dispositions which a man must put out of his mind in this life if he would endure to the end; one is to despair, and one is to hope. The world expects men to weep and groan in sorrow, to rave in calamity; but the world is always wrong. It is possible to be calm. It is possible to stand firm."

Baverstock pushed his chair farther back from

the fire, and said, "I admire a cool brain and a steady nerve. I didn't mean to criticize you; I only meant that you were to be envied."

The stranger replied, "I will tell you the long story which ended to-night; then you will understand everything."

He rose from the bed and putting his crutches under his arms swung himself to the other side of the room. By the side of the dressing-table was a tea-basket made of brown wickerwork and bound round with leather straps. The stranger stooped and lifted this basket on to the bed. As he unfastened the straps, he said to Baverstock, "I will make some tea. My story, I fear, will keep us up late. There are biscuits in that box on the mantelpiece."

He took a spirit-stove from the basket, placed it on a side table, and filled the kettle from a water-bottle on the washstand. Then he set the kettle on top, lighted the stove, and stooped down to watch the flame, which presently spirted from vaporous blue into a ghost-like white, spreading itself over the bottom of the kettle and becoming a reddish yellow.

"Perhaps you would rather smoke," he said; "those are cigarettes in the red box at the end of the mantelpiece. Please help yourself."

Baverstock rose from his chair, gratefully took a cigarette, and making a spill of a scrap of paper in the grate, lighted it at the fire.

He had the feeling that he was a guest, that his host interested him, that the night was to pass pleasantly. He wondered concerning the story he was to hear, and felt a craving for tea.

But as he stood on the hearthrug looking at the stranger, who was now placing cups and saucers on a tray, he suddenly thought of the woman alone in the night outside, and felt angry with the man, angry even with himself. The man ought to have been agitated, he himself ought to be horrified. Then a movement of another order passed across his mind; he found himself smiling involuntarily, he was conscious of amusement, the whole thing—the murder, the woman, the man—seemed to him absurd and unreal. But with this strange feeling the sight he had seen in Reimer's room rose of a sudden to his remembrance; he shivered and felt sick. "It's frightfully hot in here," he said, pushing his chair with his foot farther from the fire. A feeling of dizziness came to his head. The palms of his hands and his forehead grew moist.

"I'll turn out the lamp in a minute," said the stranger. "We shall be able to see by the fire-light." He lifted the tray in one hand, and stretch-

ing out his arm across the bed, asked Baverstock to take it. Then he turned to the dressing-table and lowered the wick of the lamp, blowing across the glass chimney.

The glare of the room gave way to darkness.

When Baverstock turned from the chest of drawers on which he had placed the tea-tray, he saw the whiteness of the sheets of the bed as the only visible note in the darkened room. Everything else, it seemed, had suddenly been blotted out. But presently the flame of the spirit-stove came to his vision, and then the mirror on the dressing-table, and then the figure of the stranger against the dark curtains of the window. Gradually the light of the fire crept through the darkness and took possession of the room, giving it a new character, informing it with a different spirit. There was a slight crumbling sound from the fire.

"I must first tell you my name," said the stranger, swinging himself on his crutches to the hearth. "And then you must tell me yours."

"My name is Baverstock."

"And mine Shennan. I am Charles Shennan."

He sat down on the side of the bed, rested his crutches against the wall, and looked towards the fire.

Baverstock seated himself in the arm-chair which was now at some distance from the hearth.

"It will be best, I think," said Shennan, "to tell the story from my own point of view, that is to say, as if I were telling you my history. But, of course, I shall not be longer than possible with the parts which lead up to the reason for this dreadful calamity."

He raised his head, turned his face from the fire, and looked towards Baverstock.

"I hope you do not think I am ungrateful," he said, "for your willingness to sit with me. It is exceedingly kind of you. In fact I do not care to think how I should have spent this night alone. That is a confession. One need not betray agitation and distress, one need not lose possession of one's control, to be very wretched and very sad."

His voice, coming through the dim light of the room, filled Baverstock with a feeling of compassion. The young man wanted to say how deeply he felt for him, he wanted to assure him that he realized how profoundly he must be shaken by this horrible deed; but he could find no words. All he could do, even while it seemed to him foolish and without reason, was to throw away his cigarette. As he did so, he cleared his throat, turned his chair more round to the bed, and sat a little

forward, his hands between his knees, his eyes raised to Shennan's face.

"If I am slow at first in telling my story," said Shennan, "or if I seem egotistical, please forgive me. I shall have to think as I go along."

"Tell it just as you choose," said Baverstock.

"First, I must tell you about my origin. My father was the owner of a provincial newspaper. When I left the university to which he sent me after school, he wanted me to enter the office of this newspaper on its business side. He thought that I was unfitted for the career of a journalist because of my crippled legs, and my elder brother was already installed as editor. But I wanted to write. Indeed it was my ambition to be a poet. You can imagine that I was not very happy as a clerk in the publishing department. Then my father was a Nonconformist of the old school, a hard-dealing man, who held doctrines which shocked me very deeply. I was not happy either at home or in the office. One day he asked me if I should care to go to America to study the business of printing and publishing. I jumped at the opportunity. I do not know that I wanted to go to America, I am perfectly sure I did not want to study printing machines and the methods of publishers; but my father's suggestion meant at least a long holiday,

a temporary release from a strain which was almost intolerable. I thought to myself, ' Now, I can get away from that hateful office, now I can leave that desk I loathe, now I can say good-bye to dreadful journals and ledgers which are so odious to me, and now I shall no longer have to go to chapel or sit at home listening to my father's sectarianism ! ' It was in that spirit I set out."

Baverstock sat back in his chair, with a feeling that he would like to smoke. He thought of the box of cigarettes on the mantelpiece, but did not care to rise from the chair to help himself.

"I had not been very long in America," said Shennan, "when a chance presented itself to me to become a journalist. I was offered some reviewing by a weekly paper published in Philadelphia. In six months I obtained an appointment on the staff of a daily paper in New York. Then I wrote to my father telling him that I elected to stay where I was, and assuring him that I could support myself. It was while I was engaged on this newspaper, earning a modest salary that I met my wife. She was of Italian extraction, and was a singer. She had started her career with the ambition to sing in grand opera, but she had failed to make any real footing, even in the concert-room. When I first met her she was depressed, disappointed,

rather bitter. We used to console each other, for I wanted to write poetry and was only a poor hack of a journalist. We used to dine together in cheap restaurants and go together to the theatres. I fell in love with her. I persuaded her to give up her battle with the world and share my garret. We married and made a fight with poverty. At first it amused her; she liked the difficulties of our existence; she was proud of her economies. But presently she fell into a condition of apathy. The thing was too small. She wanted a life that went forward, not a life that turned round. She suggested to me that she should take up her singing again. I agreed. She became happier, and did not neglect our home in spite of very hard work, for she practised assiduously, and some of her engagements took her far afield. No; it was really much happier for us both when she returned to her singing."

Baverstock remembered that he had a case of cigarettes in his pocket, and began to feel for it as unnoticeably as possible.

Shennan said, "You want to smoke? Please help yourself from the box on the mantelpiece. Keep it at your side."

"You are sure you don't mind?"

"Not in the least."

"Do you smoke yourself?"

"Later."

Baverstock lighted his cigarette and sat down again. He felt in a quite easy frame of mind. He was interested. It was pleasant to sit smoking in the fire-light and listening to a story which was full of mystery.

"I hope I have not interrupted you," he said, crossing his legs.

"No, I remember what I was saying," replied Shennan, whose face was turned to the fire. "Our home was happier. We were a little better off. It seemed that we might go on living in this fashion very comfortably for a number of years. But one day my wife told me that she was to become a mother, and she made this announcement with vexation and annoyance. For me the tidings had an extraordinary pleasure and delight. At the thought, so sudden, so utterly unexpected, that I was to be a father, my whole nature seemed to leap up within me. I became, as it were, a complete man, and the future immediately rose before me as something inexpressibly fine and adventurous. It was a revolution. Even my wife's vexation could not cloud my blue heaven. I remember that I laughed away her anger and jested her out of her annoyance. But the happiness was entirely

on my side. Till the babe was born my wife regarded this change in our life first as an interruption to her career and then as a further charge upon our narrow income. But with the birth of the child she became absolute mother.

"I am sure it is important that I should say all this, for it seems to me that maternity sprang upon my wife suddenly, out of the unknown. The feelings of maternity which are common to the race were never common to her. She had not grown with the notion of motherhood spreading gradually through her nature. She was self-centred, she was given to brooding, to introspection, she was considered by many people to be sullen and morose. I am perfectly certain that until the birth of our daughter she had known only one passion, and that a burked and frustrated passion, the passion to be a great singer. After the birth of the babe she laughed at that old passion, making fun of her ambition, expressing wonder that she should ever have cared for the vulgarity of success.

"She was absorbed into maternity. She became a needle-woman for the sake of the babe. She bought books on the rearing of children and read them industriously, marking them in the margin, and making notes in a manuscript book which she inscribed with the babe's name. When the child

was weaned she bought special utensils for the food, cooking everything herself, and discussing with the doctor questions of quantity and the values of various diets. She was entirely oblivious to the matter of my income. She incurred debts. She bought whatever she thought was essential to the child. Everything to do with the babe had to be of the first quality. We might have been the rich of New York.

"Then she came to me one day and said that we must leave our flat, that we must find a house in the suburbs. We paid visits to New Rochelle, which can be reached from the city by electric train, but there was nothing that would suit us. Then she heard of Bronxville, and we went out there and saw houses that were just within our means, small, wooden, three-family houses with patches of garden, the whole neighbourhood exactly what my wife desired. I felt terribly anxious about this change, but my wife drove me to it, and before the child was a year old we were living in Lawrence Park.

"I was overstrained and exhausted. The journey by electric train told upon my body; the time consumed in the journey told upon my mind. I had to work excessively hard, and with the burden of debt pressing heavier and heavier upon

my shoulders. But I was happy in those moments of leisure when I watched my wife with little Antoinette and saw how completely she had lost the sadness and the bitterness of the past. Nevertheless, I was unquestionably on the edge of a breakdown, a breakdown both physical and mental.

"How do you think I escaped?"

"Ah! this is a part of the story which I could talk about all night—a part of the story which is woven into the substance of my spirit, which gave me my first glimpse into reality.

"The editor of the paper for which I worked sent for me one day and told me that he had promised a friend to write something about a philanthropic and religious mission in the Fourth Ward. He spoke of it as a matter of small account, and I left him with the notion that it was an undertaking about which I need not worry myself in the least. It was in a mood of rather angry vexation that I set out to find this mission. I was ill, I was tired, I was irritable. I hated the journey. The more desperate became the streets through which I made my way, the more violent became my feeling of annoyance. I assure you I heartily disliked my errand. Slums were not to my taste.

"I found the door of the mission in a vile quarter, in Water Street. I entered and came face to face

with a woman who was just leaving. We looked at each other. My vexation dropped away from me. I was filled with a sudden expectation. I remember that I laughed. And somehow or another I knew that I was in the presence of an angel."

A slight hissing sound began to steal upon the silence of the room, and at the same moment, just as the two men became aware of this sound from the kettle, there was a gentle tap upon the door.

Baverstock jumped to his feet.

"Wait a moment," he said, "I will see who it is."

He felt that he had been waked suddenly from a dream.

CHAPTER XV

MIDGLEY stood in the corridor.

Baverstock closed the door, a finger at his lips to keep Midgley silent, and then asked him if the arrest had been made.

Midgley said to him in a hoarse voice that shook with horror, "Have you been in the room? Have you seen him?" Then, jerking up his head, he exclaimed, "God Almighty, that I should ever have lived to see a thing like that!" He rubbed his left hand roughly over his ragged beard.

He was holding a candlestick, and Baverstock could now see by the light of the candle that his face was all twisted and white as paper. He noticed, too, the coarse and dirty nails of the man, which always gave him an ill feeling.

"Come away," he said, with a hand at Midgley's elbow.

As they walked along the corridor Midgley said to him—

"The doctor has been in, and the sergeant; they're downstairs now. Lord, what a sight that

is! They're as much knocked over as I am. It's a mercy I didn't rouse my wife. It would have driven her mad. Lord, I was never so rattled in all my life."

They passed Reimer's door, and Baverstock noticed that the shoes had been removed. He had the feeling that Midgley had interrupted him. The murder itself was no longer real to him. It was something that had happened, that had passed, that had lost its interest. He wanted to hear Shennan's story. He wanted to know what events threaded the lives of Shennan and his wife to the death of Reimer. His attention was looking forward; this interruption of Midgley turned it back.

"Where is Mrs. Shennan?" he asked as they reached the stair-head.

"On her way to the lock-up."

The word "lock-up" for some reason made the murder more real to Baverstock. His thoughts flew to the woman. His imagination busied itself like a swarm of bees round the mind of that mysterious assassin, and the tic-tac of the clock in the hall came to his ears with the feeling of a tale that has been put down and is now taken up again. She was walking along the Spit with a constable in charge of her; were they talking? was she handcuffed? of what was she thinking? It came to him that the

tide had turned, and that as she walked towards Sandtown in the moonlight the river would be flowing away from her on its new journey to the sea. Then he thought of a cell in a police-station, and heard the click of the spring latch as the door closed upon her. He wondered what she would do till morning. Would she walk about? Would she sit down? Would she try to sleep? It was almost impossible to imagine this proud and scornful woman in a "lock-up."

Midgley said to him, "I suppose this has knocked her husband clean over. What does he say about it? Has he told you the why of it?"

"Not yet."

"The woman says nothing."

"Oh!"

"We found her on the Spit. She made us jump, I can tell you. She put me in mind of a ghost. I got the creeps directly I saw her. She walked straight up and said to the policeman, 'I'm ready to go.' The sergeant cautioned her as to what she said, and she replied, bold as brass, proud too, 'I killed Hans Reimer.' That was all. I never saw a body less excited or put about. But I reckon she's mad all the same. The doctor says so. When he entered Mr. Reimer's room and saw that awful sight, he said to us, 'The woman's mad.' As for

me my stomach turned over. I was nearly sick, I don't mind telling you."

They entered Midgley's private room. A lamp was burning on the round table in the centre of the apartment, and the doctor and the sergeant were sitting at this table drinking brandy.

Baverstock had not been two minutes in the room before he realized that the men there, even the doctor, were vulgarly excited by the murder. Evidently they were prepared to sit up all night talking of the mere horror of the thing. When Midgley brought a box of cigars to the table, the doctor said, "Ah, that's better!" and helped himself with the air of a man who is ready to hold forth. He looked at Baverstock and said with authority, "The woman's mad."

Midgley brought a glass for Baverstock, and the sergeant passed him the brandy bottle. "You'll have to give evidence," said the sergeant, a hard-faced, heavily built man, whose moral code was like the regulations of his official life, and who had never sinned and never done good.

Baverstock refused the brandy, and said, "I suppose I shall."

"What about her husband?" said the sergeant.

"What do you mean?"

"I ought to see him."

"He knows nothing about it. He was asleep at the time."

"But I must tell him he'll have to be at the court to-morrow."

"I'll tell him that."

The doctor put down the match with which he had lighted his cigar, and said, "Perhaps he'd like me to see him. How has he stood the shock?"

"Well, I don't think he is much more excited than his wife."

"Let's see at that now!" exclaimed Midgley.

"Speaking confidentially," said the doctor, "have you any idea about the motive

"No."

"I suppose he's talking to you?"

"Yes, arranging for the defence. I'm going to fetch Crickmay in the morning."

"You'll have to state in court," said the sergeant, "what he's saying to you now. That will be evidence. You'll be questioned about it."

The doctor said, "It's a case of revenge, that's clear enough. But the woman has brooded on her wrong. The killing of the man was a fixed idea with her. I rather think she'll spend the rest of her life in a criminal lunatic asylum."

"We shall have a crowd here to-morrow," said Midgley.

The sergeant added, "There'll be a lot of journalists from London, that's certain."

"It's finished me up for this season," said Midgley, rubbing his beard. "And what will my wife say in the morning? I shall have a time of it, and no mistake. I know this, I wouldn't have her enter that room for fifty pound."

"If the husband would like to see me," said the doctor to Baverstock, while the sergeant was telling Midgley how he should act in the morning, "I shall be very glad to prescribe for him. These shocks are dangerous things. They want careful handling."

"I think he'd better tell me his story first," Baverstock replied.

"Oh, he's telling you the story?"

The other two men listened.

"Well, he's telling me what he wants me to tell Crickmay in the morning."

"But you don't know yet why she killed him?"

"No."

"You'll find it was revenge."

Baverstock nodded his head.

"There's no chance of the man absconding?" asked the sergeant, reaching over for the brandy.

Baverstock shook his head.

Midgley lighted a cigar over the top of the lamp,

blackening the chimney, and then walked to an arm-chair, which he wheeled nearer to the table: "A thing like this," he said, "is enough to craze a man. I shall never forget the sight of that room as long as I live."

The sergeant having helped himself, poured some brandy into Midgley's tumbler, and said, "You'd better take another drink."

The atmosphere of the room became more and more irksome to Baverstock. He had not sat down, but remained standing at the table, unwilling to remain longer than was necessary. Now he moved away from the group, and said, "I'll go back to Mr. Shennan. He has got a good deal to say apparently."

"You'd better get some sleep," said the doctor.

"Be sure," said the sergeant, "you tell the man he must be at the court to-morrow by ten o'clock."

As he opened the door and went outside Baverstock heard Midgley say, "I never saw in all my life such a sight as that upstairs. Lord Almighty, I think it will get between me and sleep for the rest of my days."

He realized as he closed the door that he was without a candle. For a moment, standing in the darkness of the hall, he thought of going back to

the room for a light. But the idea of the group round the lamp put this thought out of his mind. He moved forward, slowly and carefully, towards the stairs.

His eyes became accustomed to the gloom. Moonlight filtered greyly into the darkness, strained, as it were, through the dirty curtains; it was like snow as it appears when one looks up to it falling through the air. He began to discern things. The tick of the clock seemed to him as if it sounded a louder note than usual. The voices of the men he had just left came to him as a blurred rumble, like a vehicle passing out of sound in the night. The clock was the real voice of the place. It was a voice that counted things as they passed.

As he mounted the stairs the darkness increased. He felt in his pocket for a match-box, but remembered that he had left it in the bedroom. The stairs creaked under his feet. The tic-tac of the clock sounded as if it were following him up the stairs, throwing a shadow behind him. For some reason or another the word "lock-up" kept repeating itself in his mind. He was conscious of being cold. He thought to himself, "I don't suppose she'll sleep to-night."

There was still less light in the corridor. But it was straight, and with his fingers against the left

wall he could grope his way with quickness and security. He walked quickly not because of a momentary feeling of horror as he passed in the darkness by what he thought must be Reimer's room, but because he wanted to get back to Shennan. The smell of rough brandy and cheap cigars was in his nostrils; he felt that he was still escaping from the gossip and curiosity of that room. "What a mercy," he thought, "that Lucilia is not here!" Then the face of the police-sergeant came to his remembrance, and he said to himself, "I shall have to give evidence to-morrow."

The murder itself had gone from his mind. Things connected with the murder flocked from every side round his consciousness, pressing against it, breaking up, departing for a moment, then regrouping themselves and returning with confused insistence. But Reimer had nothing to do with these thoughts; his face did not appear, his voice did not sound, his hands did not stir the air. Reimer had ceased to be a man and had failed to make himself a ghost. Baverstock thought to himself as he reached Shennan's door, "It is curious how one can bear horrors like this without excitement or agitation." And he felt that he was now used to this unusual thing, that if it should happen again in his life he would know exactly what to do.

He was rather ashamed that he had rushed up the stairs and confronted the woman with the candlestick shaking in his hand.

Shennan was pouring boiling water into the tea-pot. He did not look up as Baverstock entered, but inquired if anything had happened.

"No; it was only the hotel-keeper," Baverstock replied, closing the door; and he thought to himself, "Hullo, I've shut out the tic-tac of the clock."

After a moment Shennan said, "I was thinking when you were out of the room that my wife ought not to be treated like an ordinary criminal, and I was on the point of following you to ask that she might receive other treatment than that; but then it came to me that it must be right for her to undergo everything that is suffered by those who have broken a great law; perhaps it will be through suffering of this kind that she will be brought out of her own individual darkness into the light that lightens the whole universe; I am quite certain—quite certain—that she will be infinitely more distressed by the thought of my sorrow than by anything hard and cruel in her own circumstances."

The room was welcome to Baverstock. The subdued glow of the fire, which Shennan had made

up during his absence, only lighted up the hearth and the mantelpiece. The rest of the room was shadowy, mysterious, restful in its darkness. The air was just tintured with the fragrance of tea. Shennan's voice seemed to express, not to disturb, the calm and silence of the room. Baverstock drew his chair nearer to the fire.

"I am sure your wife is not distressed," he answered; "and you will be able to see her in the morning."

"Yes," said Shennan; "I shall see her in the morning."

Then, working himself on his crutches to the bed, he sat down on the side, and with his face turned to the fire, said to Baverstock, but as if speaking to himself, "I believe in the love of God—whatever that may mean—and I know that mediæval ideas of hell are wrong; I am quite sure, too, that the whole evolution of the universe is away from suffering and ignorance, and towards goodness and bliss; but to send a soul suddenly into the spirit world, to send it too with a curse and with hatred and without forgiveness, that is a very dreadful—a very dreadful—thing. Of course we know nothing of what comes after. God is only a name for that which is inexpressibly high and perfect. When we speak even of God's Father-

hood we really have no idea whatever as to the nature of that Fatherhood. It cannot possibly be like human Fatherhood. He submits us, or He allows us to submit ourselves, to suffering and torture which would drive a human father mad. He looks on. He watches. He does not move a finger. So if we do not really know anything about God, we cannot say, none of us can say, that we know anything at all about what comes after physical death. We cannot even thrust out into that mystery, guesses and conjectures. We can only feel that a hell of flame, or a purgatory of remorse, is beneath the dignity of the universe. We can only feel that such a heaven as religious people ask us to desire does not create longing in our spirits when we are at our best. No; we are ignorant, quite ignorant."

He paused, and then said very slowly and thoughtfully—

"Where in space is the spirit of Hans Reimer at this moment—at this very moment while we sit here? How far does the earthly character of the man, his personality, persist? We do not know. But whatever exists of him, and wherever that essential core of his individuality may now be, it went swiftly from this earth, driven out by a blow, pursued by a curse, and heavy with unfor-

giveness. I think the spirit of the man will eventually become whole and strong; I feel that evolution now and for ever is the secret of creation; but who can tell what that unshrived spirit must endure before it gets upon the path of light?"

He rose from the bed, and put his crutches under his arms.

"We must, surely, be making something here," he said quietly. "The universe can't be a machine that has started by accident and now runs without purpose. Life is different from matter. Life seems to be struggling to shape itself into particular forms only that it may stretch out its hands to grasp higher realities. Yes, I think that is manifest enough. But what it is, who can say?" He shuffled forward a step. "However," he concluded, "I must not waste your time with speculations and perplexities." He moved forward to a chair. "Will you," he said, "pour out the tea, while I take up the thread of my story? You will find milk and sugar on the tray. I was telling you, I think, how I came to make the acquaintance of a mission in the slums of New York."

"Yes, that is where you had got."

Baverstock poured out a cup of tea and carried it to the cripple.

"I hope I have made you feel," said Shennan,

putting out his hand, "how very grateful I am, for your kindness in staying with me."

As he said this he shivered; and when he took the cup tea spilled over the edge and the spoon trembled against the saucer.

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CHAPTER XVI

"FIRST of all I will tell you," said Shennan, after a pause, "that my visit to the mission was the turning-point in my journalistic fortunes. I went there, as you know, unwillingly, most unwillingly, and I intended to write only a paragraph about the mission's work. But I found in that base street, among the wreckage of humanity, such extraordinary drama that instead of a paragraph I wrote an article, and not only one article, but several. These articles created something of a sensation. I was invited to visit other missions. Letters came to me from most of the big cities on the east side, and even from towns away on the Pacific coast. My income doubled in a few months. I was asked to make a book of my articles by three or four firms of publishers. In a few weeks I had become a writer of some moderate importance. At any rate I was out of the wood.

"My wife was not in the least interested by these

articles, but she was exceedingly delighted by the change in our fortune. I talked to her about the strange people I met in the Fourth Ward, I told her many of the stories that came to me on these visits, but her attention was not in the least deflected from its usual course; it held on; she thought of nothing but Antoinette. When I look back now I see how curious it is that while she, who did not want the child, lost herself in maternal love, I, who had simply longed for the little one, found myself more interested in my work than in the child. The truth is, I had anticipated something more than reality, while my wife had not imagined the reality. I had conjured up the idea of a faery child who ran to one, who spoke, who understood, who was exquisitely beautiful and gracious. My excitement had overleaped infancy. This infant, who cried so often, who woke at night, who did not understand what was said to her, who manifested every sign of a querulous disposition and a bad temper—well, I was disappointed; she did not attract me. On the other hand, my wife had not visualized the infant as a thing that lived, as a thing that needed her for its existence, as a thing that would look at her and place its face against her breast; she had thought only of the child as an interruption to her career. So, you see, while

I became more absorbed in my work, my wife, who loved me better for my improved fortunes, but took no interest in the means which had secured them, became more absorbed in the child. We were very much better off. Our life was happier. But there was this division in the house.

"And now I must tell you, because it is part of the story, about the effect the mission had on my mind—as briefly as I can. It was there, for the first time in my life, that I encountered Christians. I had never seen before, either in England or the States, men and women who were religiously different from the rest of the world. No doubt, of course, such people exist, many of them, everywhere; but I had never encountered them before. I had never thought of a Christian as different from the rest of humanity. My father, for instance, struck me as not different at all, spiritually, from men who did not make any practice of religion, or who frankly called themselves Agnostics. But there was a woman at this mission who was spiritually different from every one I had ever met. She was really exactly what I had imagined angels to be, angels shaped by Burne Jones and vitalized by St. Francis or William Blake. She was not pretty, but she was beautiful. Her face had the effect upon me of a wonderful picture. I liked to look at it, just

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as one looks at a picture, seeking for meanings which are not immediately apparent, and also seeking nothing at all, but allowing its graciousness, its serenity, its kindness to breathe themselves into one's mind. And it was the same with her voice. Sometimes one listened intently to what she said, sometimes one found this and that quality in her tones; but very often one was happy in just listening to the sound of her voice, without attention and without curiosity.

"It was from her I learned for the first time that people who work in what we call the underworld can be happier than those who possess wealth and whose lives are passed as far away from misery and ugliness as money can take them. This woman, for example, had the gift of thoughtful laughter. She was not witty, she was not even humorous, and yet one could not be in her company without feeling a lifting of the spirits, a movement of one's mind towards cheerfulness. Her laughter was a running accompaniment to her devotion. I have never known a human being so happy. I have never known man or woman so full of real gaiety—the gaiety that lasts, the gaiety of a perfectly pure soul. You can imagine how such a woman would tempt the loafers and vagabonds of the underworld. But she knew a rogue by intuition, she could tell

a scoundrel before he opened his lips to utter his calculated tale of deception; and she used to laugh the rogue into confession, but with the scoundrel she would sympathize, sorry for his scoundrelism, till he either wept or ran away from her. I remember once going into a foul court and coming on a brutal-faced woman who was flogging a quite small child with a strap; this friend of mine stood still and regarded the woman till she stopped for very shame; then she went forward, lifted the weeping child into her arms, and said to her, 'Forgive your mother; she, too, must have had such a mother when she was a child, or she would not beat you so cruelly; forgive her, little one; dry your eyes and tell her that you are sorry for her, that you forgive her.'

"It was from her I learned to see that our one hope of converting this hideous muddle of civilization into a kingdom of Heaven is by making men aware that without forgiveness of those who have sinned against them, they themselves cannot move one finger towards millennium. But if I were to tell you all I learned from this wonderful woman I should keep you till daylight. Let it suffice that she gave me—I, who had been Nonconformist, Atheist, Agnostic—religion, the religion of the veritable Christ, the religion which changes men

at the centre, the religion which loves goodness and is sorry for those who are not good."

He paused at this point, and Baverstock, over whom a feeling of disappointment and drowsiness had just begun to steal, roused himself, and, stretching out his hand for Shennan's cup, asked if he might give him more tea.

"You must be thinking," said Shennan, passing the cup, "that all this has very little to do with the calamity of to-night. But in truth it is a very essential part of the story. It belongs to what is to follow, and it runs through everything up to this very moment."

Baverstock said that he was interested in what Shennan was saying, but in his thoughts he had the uncomfortable conviction that this man, like Reimer, was a religious fanatic. He was tired. He was heavy. The warmth of the room dulled his faculties; the pleasant dim light of the fire made sleep seem to him a delicious idea. "It is strange," he thought, "how sleep overcomes a man; I suppose that a husband who loses his wife, or a father who loses his child, the same night yawns at last, and sinks into sleep with the tears dry on his cheeks."

He got up, to rouse his brain, and went to the mantelpiece, feeling in the darkness for the cigarettes.

"The box is on the floor, I think," said Shennan; "just by your chair."

"Oh, thanks; I had forgotten. Won't you smoke yourself?"

"Not yet, I think."

Baverstock sat down in his chair again and stretched out his legs. "Please go on," he said.

"I must tell you," said Shennan, "that my wife did not wish to move into a larger house with this improvement in our fortunes. She suggested to me that we should continue to live as economically as possible, and that we should save every dollar we could for the sake of Antoinette. I was willing enough, and so we lived in our three-family house, and my balance at the bank mounted up with a swiftness which surprised me. Sometimes I spoke of this matter to my wife, and she would put her hands on my shoulders, kiss me, and say, 'Antoinette will be quite an heiress.' If I said that there were other things than money, she laughed contemptuously, and declared that the world was not such a bad place for those who had fortune, but for the poor it was a prison or a workhouse. 'Ah,' I would exclaim, 'if you knew as much about the poor as I do!' 'It is enough for me,' she would reply, 'that I see them and feel sorry for them.'

"Antoinette was nearly three years of age, when I received a cable one day calling me home. My father was dying. I arrived in time to kiss him, and to watch him slip from long unconsciousness into gradual death. All the hardness and narrowness, and all the pettiness which I had seen in his face disappeared at the touch of death; there was nothing there when life took flight except gentleness and forgiveness.

"I wanted to return to America at once, but business connected with my dead father's affairs kept me in England for nearly six weeks. He had left me a part of his fortune, which gave me an income of three hundred pounds a year. I remember thinking when I heard of this that my wife would be glad to welcome me home with such good news—good news for Antoinette's sake.

"When I got back to the States, I found everything in Antoinette which I had anticipated before her birth. She was no longer an infant. She was really a child. When I first saw her I exclaimed to my wife, 'Why, she has grown up!' and before an hour had passed I had lost my heart to this child, whose beauty was wonderful in my eyes, and whose ways were so charming that they gave me a joy that I had hitherto missed in life. You will

not understand, I expect, what I mean; no man ever knows until he is a father, and not every father, what love for a child does with the human heart. But it really does transform things. It really does give a man new enthusiasm and fresh delight. And if there is anything of childhood in his own heart—I mean, if he has not become hardened by the world or immersed in the world's affairs—why, then the child becomes the very closest and dearest of his companions; he is only supremely happy when he is in the company of this playmate.

"My wife said to me one day, 'I see that you take more notice now of Antoinette.' 'Take notice!' I exclaimed; 'why, I adore her.' And my wife said, 'If only you will drop your foolish notions about religion we shall be very happy.' I was amazed. I did not know that my wife was sufficiently interested in me to know that I had a religion. I said to her, 'What is it in my religion that strikes you as foolish?' She shrugged her shoulders. 'I do not know,' she replied, 'but it all seems to me very unnatural and unreal.'

"In spite of this we were far happier, very, very much happier than we had ever been before. We felt very soon, however, that it would be better in every way to possess a house of our own, and after

much searching we moved away as far as Plainfield, about thirty miles from the city, where we found a pleasant little wooden house, in a garden of its own and close to the open country, which exactly suited our minds. Antoinette's fortune accumulated at a great rate. I never touched the money which came to me from my father's bequest. Everything went to what we called Antoinette's fortune. My wife was never so generous in her happiness as when we calculated together what sum of money would come to the child when she was twenty years of age.

"I said to her once, 'You will soon have to be teaching Antoinette the rudiments of religion.' The child was then six years of age. 'She is not curious about such things,' my wife answered. 'But,' I rejoined, 'you cannot let her grow up in ignorance of the spiritual life.' 'When she wants to know she will ask us,' my wife answered. I was not vexed by this. The religion which had come to me so late in life was real enough now to keep me free of anxiety. I was sorry for what my wife missed. I knew that one day Antoinette would ask me about the mystery of existence. I was content to wait.

"The next year, I think, was the happiest I had

ever spent. I was able to retire altogether from daily journalism. I wrote books, and I wrote articles for the reviews and magazines. This meant that I was more at home. Antoinette and I became inseparable companions. I used to take her into the woods. I taught her to make a garden. I took her to see the animals in Bronx Park. We read books together. I discovered that Hans Andersen was a greater genius than I had suspected. I delighted in what I read to the child, and in what I taught her—such as drawing, for instance—I myself had the pleasures which come to a learner who wants to learn.

"Then came a day when she herself asked me the meaning of the words God, angels, heaven. I told her. I told her just as one would tell a fairy-story. She listened breathless, rapt, eager—the lips parted, the big eyes, full of wonder, searching my face. I thought to myself, 'She will believe in these things as no child has ever yet believed,' and I became excited in my telling, holding her close to me, kissing her forehead, smoothing her hair. At last, struggling a little away from me, and with both hands on my chest, looking up in my eyes, she asked, 'Have you told Mother?'

"We were in the woods. I had no answer. I

began again and again, trying to smile, trying to speak, guilty and ashamed to meet the child's eyes. All at once she slipped off my knee, clutched eagerly at my hand to drag me up, and said, 'Let's go and tell her!' Then she stooped down with her free hand and endeavoured to lift up one of my crutches.

"Well, we went home. When we entered the house my wife came to meet us. Antoinette ran to her, sprang at her, with this wonderful news about God, the angels, heaven. I stood at the door watching. To my surprise—you can imagine my pleasure—my wife lifted the child in her arms, kissed her, and said, 'I never knew that till now,' and there was something in her voice which told me that the child had made spiritual life real to her at last. I hobbled forward, and, resting on one of my crutches, put my arm round her, and said, 'Now we are the happiest family from one end of America to the other, aren't we?' And she said, 'Yes, we are perfectly happy now.' Can you guess what it was to me when I saw Antoinette kneeling at my wife's knee after her bath, and saying, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us'?

"One morning Antoinette came into my room

when I was very busy, busy because I had to start in a few minutes for New York. She asked me to tell her about a picture, and, looking hurriedly away from my writing, I saw that it was a picture of the Crucifixion. I was going to give her a quick answer, but when I saw the picture I said to her, 'Wait till I come back this evening, and then I will tell you.' 'Can't you tell me now?' she asked. 'Not now,' I said, 'because it is a very beautiful story, and I should only spoil it.' She stood looking at the picture for a moment, and then, raising her head, 'Shall I ask Mother to tell me, or wait till you come back?' I said, 'Wait till I come back.' I remember that this interruption made me hurry to the station.

"I returned before six. 'Where is Antoinette?' I asked, for on my way home I had been thinking how I should tell her the story of Christ. My wife replied that Mrs. O'Gorman, a neighbour of ours, had taken the child with a party to Bronx Park. I sat down, and my wife squeezed some orange juice into a tumbler for me, saying that I looked hot. I mopped my forehead, and said, 'I hurried because of a promise to Antoinette. I am to tell her a story.' 'I know,' said my wife; 'she showed me the picture.' She was just handing me the

tumbler, and I can remember how the ice clinked against the glass as I took it in my hand, when Mrs. O'Gorman came running into the house.

"I knew before she spoke that something dreadful had happened to Antoinette. My heart stood still. I was like stone.

"My wife sprang at her and seized her by the shoulders. Then she snatched away her hands, clasped them in front of her, and stamping, stamping, stamping with her foot, said, 'Antoinette! Antoinette!'—her poor face stricken, her eyes fixed in horror. She was demanding her child, but her voice was like the voice of one who makes that demand of Death. It was full of the intuition of despair.

"I said to our neighbour, 'Tell us the truth. It is not your fault. The child has been run over, she is injured, perhaps she is killed. Tell us the truth.'

"She fell at the mother's feet. 'But it is my fault, it is my fault,' she cried, and burst into tears. In the midst of her tears, she sobbed out, 'Your little one is lost.'

"At that moment the other children of the party flocked into the room, each one saying when they

had last seen our little Antoinette. And my wife fell upon our neighbour, shaking her like an animal, and saying, 'Where is she? where is she? You must find her. Take me to the place. You have lost her, and you must find her.' And I said, stooping for my crutches on the floor, 'If she is only lost she can be found.' "

CHAPTER XVII

JUST as he said, "If she is only lost she can be found," the replenished fire, which had been heavily struggling into new life, sent a tongue of white flame dancing, leaping, and hissing through the smoking mass of coal on top of it, so that the room was filled with sudden light, with excited shadows, and with a sound of action.

For a moment or two this white flame played upon the flakes of soot crusted on the sides of the chimney, and flung wild rushes of light across the ceiling; then, as suddenly as it had appeared, it flickered into silence, wavered with feebleness, died down to an oily point, and departed. The red glow between the bars was the only light left in the room; thick clouds of heavy white smoke steamed heavily towards the chimney; the silence of the room returned slowly and languorously, like the closing of eyelids.

Baverstock had been aware during the last two or three minutes of a very gradually increasing

excitement in the voice of Shennan—an excitement deep down in the soul of the man, and quite easily restrained, but still an excitement, as though his memory was passing from prologue to narrative, as though the curtain of history was ascending.

He could not understand at present how the disappearance of Antoinette accounted in any way for the assassination of Hans Reimer, but he was sure that Shennan was now approaching the explanation of that calamity. He found his interest quickening, his attention straining. He waited anxiously for the voice of Shennan to sound again. The excitement which he heard in the tones of that voice, more perhaps than the disappearance of Antoinette, caused this energy of his attention.

"If I had stopped to think," said Shennan, "instead of rushing to action, I might have saved my child from what followed. But one does not think in the suddenness and shock of a crisis like that. It was enough for me that the child was still alive. I picked up my crutches and went quickly to the telephone, while my wife continued to hold our neighbour in her grasp, demanding Antoinette, and stamping on the floor with her foot. The children were frightened by the violence of my wife; some of them began to cry, and some

of them backed to the door. I called the number of a police-station in New York into the telephone, and then, turning to the group in the room, I begged them to keep silence, telling Mrs. O'Gorman that I might have to ask her important questions.

"My wife came to my side. She stood close to me, a hand through my arm, her whole body trembling, her teeth grinding, her breathing fast and hard. I told the police that my child had been lost in Bronx Park, gave them a description of her, and asked them to move immediately. They assured me that the child would be found. Mrs. O'Gorman, kneeling on the floor, her face bowed over her hands and resting on the seat of a chair, continued to moan and to weep, answering my questions between sobs, protesting that the loss of Antoinette would kill her. When I had finished with the telephone I went to her and said, 'We shall find the child; you must not despair; go home, and I will send you news to-night.'

"When my wife and I were alone, she asked me what we should do. I said to her 'We must leave it to the police, but I shall go to Bronx Park and make inquiries for myself.' 'I will go with you,' she said. I replied that some one must wait at home to receive Antoinette, who might return at

any moment. My wife went to the window, and stood there, looking out. I hobbled to the door and reached down my hat from a peg in the hall. It struck me that it was harder to wait than to go on this inquiry. I returned to the room. 'Perhaps it would be better,' I said, 'if you went, and I waited.' My wife did not turn her head. She answered, 'No, I will wait.'

"It was after midnight when I returned. And I returned without tidings of any kind. My wife was standing at the gate, waiting for me.

"We went indoors and sat down opposite each other, but I could not bear to look into her eyes. We talked for a few minutes. I pretended to be full of hope, certain that the morrow would bring us back the child, but my wife kept saying, 'Something terrible has happened.' I went to the telephone and rang up my old newspaper. A friend of mine on the staff gave me real reason to hope. He said that occasionally well-dressed children were kidnapped for ransom, and that in a day or two I should hear in a roundabout way of how Antoinette might be rescued. I told my wife, and then I asked my friend to advertise that we would pay a reward of five thousand dollars for news of the child. He said, 'That is too much; you will be worried out of your lives by touts and harpies; make it

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hundreds, five hundred dollars.' I told my wife, and she exclaimed, 'No, no; five thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars—everything we possess.'

"We sat up through the night, sometimes walking to and fro outside, sometimes sitting by the open window.

"Early in the morning a man came to see me. He said that on the previous afternoon, somewhere between four and half-past, he had been standing outside Bronx Park, when he noticed two children coming from the gardens hand in hand, one a very well-dressed girl of twelve or thirteen, the other a child more simply dressed, of perhaps seven or eight years of age. The description he gave of this younger child convinced my wife that it was Antoinette. The man said he particularly noticed the children, because the older one was stooping down and evidently coaxing the little one to go with her, while the little one appeared to be uncertain and puzzled, constantly looking backward over her shoulder. He thought that the older girl behaved very prettily, and it interested him to see how she mothered the smaller child. He watched them cross the road to an automobile on the other side, and saw the chauffeur jump down from his seat and open the door. The children entered the automobile, which was a closed one, and then

the chauffeur drove away in the direction of New York.

"I did not know what to make of this intelligence, and went to the telephone, ringing up the police. They told me that unless the man had taken a note of the number of the car the information was not of much value to them. I asked the man if he had noticed the number, and he said that he had noticed it but could not remember it. When the police heard this they told me that the story was very probably trumped up for the sake of a reward, and cautioned me not to give my informant any money. 'But supposing it is true?' I asked. 'Well, we don't think it is true,' was the answer. 'You can do nothing?' 'We are making inquiries, Mr. Shennan; you must wait.' When I told my wife what they said, she returned to the man and drawing him to the window, facing him there with the light full on his face, she said to him, 'Is it true, what you have told us?' He looked at her with surprise. 'Why,' he asked, 'what interest should I have in telling you a falsehood?' She asked him if he had come for a reward, and he indignantly protested that he would not touch a penny of our money. Then she caught him by the arm as he was moving angrily away, and said, 'For God's sake, find her, find her,'—

such pathos, such tragedy in her voice that the man went white in a moment. 'I'll do all I can,' he said; 'I will, straight; but I tell you I fear it's a bad business,'—and he looked towards me. 'What do you mean—a bad business?' asked my wife, shaking his arm. The man glanced at her, and then back at me. 'I think it's a bit of the devil's business, that's what I think it is,' he said. And then, moving towards me, he added, 'I'll have a word with you, alone and outside.'

"What happened to me at that moment? It was as if my brain had fallen in like a roof. I felt myself spinning round and round, falling at the same time into bottomless darkness. And yet I could see my wife rushing towards me. And yet I knew that the wind was blowing in through the window and that the curtain was stirring. And yet I could hear the man saying, 'Of course I may be wrong, and I hope I may be wrong; but that's what I think it is.'

"I felt my wife's hands on my arms, and knew that she was holding on to me for support, not saving me from falling. Then I was strong. Then I was sane. It was a delusion this hideous, dizzy, nauseating sensation of spinning and falling. I steadied myself, and cried out, 'What are you saying? You're mad. You must be mad.'

She's a child ! ' And then my wife's voice sounded close to my ear. ' Tell the police, quick, tell the police.' I tried to move, but could not. I remained there, transfixed on my crutches, saying, ' You're mad, you're mad; why, she's a child.' And I could see the man quailing before me."

Baverstock moved in his chair. "I don't understand," he said in a low voice. He was shaken by the cripple's sudden and tremendous excitement. "What had the man told you? What did he mean?"

But Shennan did not answer. "I knew that my wife left me," he said, his eyes shining, his hands quivering; "and I knew that she went to the telephone, but I still stood where I was, repeating my cry. Then, all of a sudden, my crutches gave way under me, and I fell with a thud to the floor. I fainted. You see, I had not thought that such a thing was possible. It was like an earthquake. It was like the Last Judgment. I had heard vaguely of such things, but not concerning children. I knew that girls were stolen away from their homes by false advertisements or by men masquerading as lovers; I knew that there was an organized trade in girls—I knew that. But I had never thought that children were——"

Baverstock sprang from his chair. "Great God

in Heaven!" he cried, "you don't mean to tell me——"

His hands were clenched at his side. It seemed to him that the walls of the room had opened, that a great wind was shouting past him, that things were falling down with a roar and a rattle, and that there was nothing under his feet but a sea of mud sliding into darkness.

Shennan looked up at him.

"Damnation!" cried Baverstock; "hell and damnation, I can't believe it!" He walked to the mantelpiece, turned round, came back to his chair, thrusting it with his foot out of the way, and crossed to the other side of the room, turning there and standing still.

He was breathing in gasps. He was trembling.

"You do not know of these things?" Shennan asked quietly.

"Then it's true?"

"Yes, it's true."

"True! That children are sold into filthy vice—*children?*"

"Yes, it's true."

For a moment Baverstock stood looking into the darkness, which seemed to be closing round Shennan in masses of smoke, in great clouds of vapour. Then he suddenly burst out, "God! what

a bloody world!" He was shaken by a violent convulsion. He raised his voice, "What a bloody, bloody world!" he cried, between his teeth. "Children!—how old did you say?—my God! if this is true! Look here, I don't want to hear any more. I can't. Leave this out. Get to the end." He came forward, trembling and white. "I wish I'd never been born," he said, and this exclamation truthfully expressed the revulsion of his whole being.

Shennan said to him, "I was as innocent of these things as you are. And when I learned about them I became as you are now, only I was like a madman."

Baverstock went to his chair. He stood beside it, looking down on the floor, his hands in the pockets of his jacket, his face contorted with anger and indignation.

"When I tell you," continued Shennan, "the rest of this story, you will understand——"

Baverstock swung suddenly round. "I see now! I see now!" he exclaimed. "Reimer was the devil. It was Reimer who did it." He took his hands from his pockets and put them to his forehead, pressing them back over his hair. "Your wife killed him because of that. She was right. I felt she was right from the first. But——!" He

stooped towards Shennan. "No, I'm wrong. It wasn't Reimer. You wanted to forgive him. Forgive him what? How does he come into the story, then? Tell me; I don't understand."

Shennan said to him, "Sit down and let me finish. I will tell you everything."

Baverstock backed slowly away from him. The explosion of rage and fury which had burst uncontrollably from the depths of his mind on first hearing this dreadful and incredible truth, left him now shaken, confused, in some mysterious way sullen and ashamed. He was conscious at one and the same time of loathing for the world and contempt for himself. He hated life; he reproached himself. If he shuddered at the world for its abomination, he sickened at the thought that he had made an exhibition of his feelings. This story of inhuman, devilish horror had not only desecrated and defiled his mind, it had made him actually show the secret and the sacred depths of his soul to a stranger. The Englishman returned.

As he moved slowly away from Shennan, the slumbering fire fell in; a swarm of little flames, suddenly piercing the dusty coal, spirted towards the blackened chimney, hissing and flickering, joining together and filling the room with wavering, uncertain light.

Baverstock felt that Shennan was looking at him. He turned his back and walked towards the chair which he had pushed away.

"I suppose it is necessary," he said, stooping for the box of cigarettes, "that I should hear the rest of this story?"

"It's my wife's defence."

Baverstock started. "I had forgotten," he said, and turned round, the box in his hands. Then as he sat down he said, "You won't think me unfeeling if I smoke?"

"No, of course not."

"A story like this gives one a nasty turn."

"I have lived with it for a long time."

Baverstock noticed that his hand was shaking as he struck a match for his cigarette. "Well, I mustn't interrupt you again," he said; "please go on."

Shennan turned his face to the fire, and went on with his narrative.

"There is no need for me," he said, "to tell you about our torture, our agony, during the year in which we searched for our child. But some things I must tell you. I must tell you, to begin with, that we gave up our house and came into the city, renting a small flat; and I must tell you that although I had the chief newspapers of America on my side,

and although no single effort in giving publicity to the loss of this beautiful little creature was neglected, nothing came of it all: nothing—nothing. It was not till seven or eight months had gone by that I discovered how deeply the police organization is involved in the iniquity of this traffic. I might as well have gone for my child to Hans Reimer himself as to the police. Do you know that a Police Commissioner of New York has publicly attested that he refused in one year bribes offered to him by this trade and other organizations of vice amounting to six hundred thousand dollars? The police have a blackmail tariff for the protection of these houses of iniquity. One of the syndicates, owning houses of this kind, is said to have made a profit of two hundred thousand dollars in a single year—how much is that?—let me think, why, something like forty thousand pounds. So you see I was searching for my poor little child among wolves and with wolves to mislead me. I was opposing myself against one of the great Trusts, opposing myself with the police to help me against a Trust which paid the police to shield it. Yes, I might just as well have gone to Hans Reimer himself.

“And then I must tell you this. When I came to learn that children are stolen, placed in bad

houses, and broken into the wickedness of that life by the most heinous tortures so indescribably devilish that they freeze the blood to hear of them—when I learnt this, religion went from me and I plunged into spiritual darkness. Day by day I deliberately cursed God. Day by day I deliberately uttered the calculated blasphemy of my hating and loathing soul. I used to cry out day and night, 'I will only forgive you, O merciless God, if my child is dead.' But for this wild rage, but for my first action in going to the police, I might possibly have saved my child—I might at least have saved her the end. But my reason went. I could not think. I forgot everything I had come to know. I trusted my despairing hope to the newspapers and police.

"I must tell you, too, that my wife never once gave way to wild or passionate despair. When she knew that this dreadful thing had befallen our child she sank into a condition of apathy. I only heard her speak with violence very rarely, and always concerning human laws. When I raged and cursed God in her hearing, she would turn to me and say, 'You are wasting your breath; it is man you should curse.' She did not pray, she never went to church, she shut herself from the world, and passed her life in almost unbroken

silence. When I came back from the slums of New York or Chicago, or San Francisco, or Buenos Ayres—for I visited every great city where I thought it was possible to find my child—she never asked me for news, she hardly raised her eyes to look at my face.

"But it was always before her that I raved. In the presence of the rest of the world I was calm, I was self-possessed. It seemed as if I could only unburden the awful agony of my soul before the mother of Antoinette. I would tell her everything I learned on my journeys, everything I discovered in the bad houses that I visited, cursing God as I did so, and weeping in my irresistible fury. She would say, 'Man does these things, why do you speak of God?' And I would say, 'God looks on.' And she would answer, 'Waiting for us to act.' She never breathed one word of her anguish.

"Towards the end of a year of our loss, I received a letter from the woman of whom I have spoken to you, the woman at the mission in the Fourth Ward. She wanted to see me about some extension of the work. She said that they had missed me at the mission, and hoped that they had not offended me in any way. There was no reference to our tragedy.

"This letter brought back to my disordered mind memories that were at once reproachful and tranquillizing. I recalled the goodness of the woman, the beauty of her face, the gentleness of her voice. I remembered how she had spoken to me about the forgiveness of sins, and of the joy I had felt when I saw Antoinette kneeling at her mother's——"

He stopped, unable to continue, and Baverstock heard his breathing.

After a moment he continued: "Well, I went down to Water Street. When I saw her I said at once, 'You have not heard of my loss?' No, she had heard nothing. Such is every great city; the newspapers touch only a fringe of the populations; the busiest people know less than others of the life around them. I told her the story. She put her hands on mine, where they rested on the grips of my crutches, and looking up into my face, said to me, 'Why didn't you come to me?' I thought she meant, Why had I not come to her for comfort and consolation. I replied, 'No one could have helped me; I have ceased to believe in a God.' But she pressed my hands and said, 'Not that, not that; but I might have helped you to find her.' I stared at her unable to say a word, a feeling of inexpressible remorse taking possession of

me, a feeling that by my own action, my own madness, I had missed the one hope of saving our little child. She said to me, 'I may be able to find her now; tell me about it, tell the whole story.'

"And then, do you know, I was simply swept away by the most terrible thought that ever visited my brain, the most terrible thought, I must suppose, that can visit the human soul? Did I want to see my child? Could I look into her eyes again? Would it be possible to endure life in the presence of that shattered purity? Ah, that was agony! Where do such thoughts come from? How do they spring to the brain? For the first time I realized that the child was dead to me for ever. For the first time I apprehended that my loss was everlasting. 'Find her now!' I exclaimed; 'but what would you find?' She said to me, 'Your child, your very own child, the same child that you lost.' And then I had the most passionate longing to find Antoinette, to find her however ravaged and broken, to find her and take her in my arms and kiss her and laugh over her—yes, laugh with joy, laugh till she laughed. I said to the woman, 'If you find my child you will give me back all that I have lost with her.' And I told her the story.

"Three weeks after this she sent me a message to come and see her. My wife exclaimed, 'They have found her!' Her torpor dropped away. She clapped her hands, her eyes shone, and she said to me, 'We shall have her back—think, we shall have her back!' It was like a person rising from the grave. I begged her not to hope for such a blessing, and began to make my preparations for starting. 'I must go, too,' she exclaimed, and hurried to her room.

"We went together, and found at the mission an old woman who had once been a procuress. My friend said to us, 'I told the particulars to this woman, who knows a great deal of the trade, and she feels certain that she knows the man who has stolen your child.' We turned to this old woman, and she said to us, 'Yes, it's Hans Reimer.' Then she explained that Hans Reimer was at the head of an organization calling itself The States Mutual Benefit Society, and that this wealthy and powerful society was nothing more and nothing less than a huge organization for importing and kidnapping girls. It owned mansions on Upper West Broadway in New York, dives in the Bowery, red-lamp districts in Chicago, and carried on an international trade with nearly every country in the world. My wife interrupted this terrible narrative, demanding

to know how she could find her child. The old woman said to us, 'The children from five to ten years of age, most of them are illegitimate, are kept in fine houses either in New York or Chicago. After that age he generally sends them to the Argentine. Then they come back after four or five years, those that survive, and are sold to dive-keepers either on this side or the other. Some of them are shipped to China and Japan.' My wife was like death. In the midst of my own sick horror I saw that awful look on her face, that look of death, and I think it saved me from madness. In a voice which just rose above a whisper she told the woman that she wanted to see her child at once, without an hour's delay, and said, 'Take me to her now; take me, you know the place, take me.'

"Well, it was five weeks before the old woman came to the mission and said that she had found our child."

"She found her?" asked Baverstock.

"Yes."

Baverstock, who had asked his question impulsively, said, "Thank God for that."

He began to breathe freely. For the last few moments he had been sitting bunched up in his chair, stiff with horror, breathless with indigna-

tion. When Shennan spoke of children of five years of age in these houses of hell . . . as only by a strong effort that he had restrained himself from uttering a cry of rage. He watched the firelight flickering over the face of Shennan, spellbound and horrified by what he heard, listening with eagerness and disgust to the even voice proceeding out of the darkness with this tale of dreadful infamy. There was commotion in his brain, nausea in his soul, and horror in his heart; nevertheless the central point of his consciousness, attention, was set upon Shennan and he waited without protest, waited without excitement, for the end of this story which had destroyed for him his love of life and his satisfaction with the world.

"Thank God for that," he said, and relaxed the rigidity of his body, shifting his position, and stretching out his legs.

"The old woman had found her," said Shennan, "in a lock hospital."

"In a hospital?"

"In a lock hospital."

"What is a lock hospital?"

"A place of skulls, a place of corruption, a place of death. Do you not know what a lock hospital is? Ah, they hide these things! It is part of the

business of civilization, of false civilization, of false respectability, of false religion, to cover up and hide away these sinks and cesspools of iniquity. But corruption is nature's method. Break nature's laws, and corruption follows. Men look on and see the breaking of these great laws, these great laws on which the health and salvation of the human race depend, and when God's penalty falls they draw a thick curtain over the scene, post sentries, and send emissaries among the people to mislead and deceive them. You may know that the law is broken; but you must not know what penalty is exacted. You may know man's disobedience; but you must not know God's chastisement. Man's disobedience is sad and deplorable; but the chastisement of God, that is indecent. Yes, I know, they hush these things up, here and elsewhere. It is a dangerous policy. I would strip civilization stark naked. I would leave nothing hid, nothing covered. A lock hospital is a place where the flesh of men and women is eaten up and destroyed by the diseases which grow maggot-like in the body of vice. Do you know that in one single day in a well-known brothel in America—the case was tried in the Supreme Court—one girl, one girl alone, was visited by forty-five different men."

Baverstock covered his face with his hands, shuddering and sick.

"Such atrocious defamation does not go unpunished. The lock hospitals of the world are filled with men and women rotting, putrefying, to death." He paused. "It was in a lock hospital that the old woman had discovered our little Antoinette."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE fire was now burning brightly and steadily. Baverstock removed his hands from his face and looked at Shennan. There was no change in the crippled man's attitude; he was still sitting on the edge of the bed, his hands in his lap, his crutches at his side, his gaze directed towards the fire.

It was possible by the firelight to see the expression of his face, which was forlorn and sorrowful, all the sweetness and gentleness gone, but nothing of bitterness there, nothing of indignation. Baverstock thought to himself, "Whatever he may say, he is a broken man," and feeling that he had spied upon Shennan's soul he turned away his eyes.

Shennan roused himself and said, "Before I tell you this part of the story, which is the hardest of all to tell, we will make some more tea; and now I will smoke." He prepared to get up, but Baverstock rose quickly and said, "Let me make the tea," at the same time handing to Shennan the box of cigarettes.

He was grateful for this interruption. It helped him to busy himself with the trifling business of making tea. He was glad to be on his feet, glad to be moving, glad to be doing something.

The release of his attention was at first a refreshment to him, in rising to his feet it seemed as if he had shaken from his mind some foul stagnation which had gathered there, like ooze and slime; but presently he realized that the immense strain of listening to this story had exhausted him. He became suddenly tired, weary, dull. His body ached. His brain buzzed. He felt cold and drowsy.

He came back from lighting the stove and found Shennan in the same attitude, but smoking, his eyes still staring into the fire.

Baverstock said, "You had better rest till the water boils," and took a cigarette from the box.

Shennan made no answer.

Baverstock crossed the room, lighting his cigarette, and began attending to the wick of the stove. Then he emptied the tea-pot, cleansed the cups, and returned to the fire with the tray. Shennan had not moved.

Baverstock sat down in his chair, which he pulled and jerked by the arms nearer to the fire. For

several minutes he could hear the silence of the room singing in his ears.

Shennan said, "I have been thinking of my wife. She is alone. She has no one to speak to. And for days and days, many days, she will be alone."

"She will not be punished," said Baverstock.

"I think she wishes to die," Shennan replied.

"But waiting alone, quite alone, that must be dreadful. I wish I had said something more to her than I did say before she left me. I was stunned and shocked. I could not bring myself to believe that she had killed him. But I ought to have known. As I have been telling you the story I have been saying to myself that I ought to have known."

There was a long silence between them, and at last Baverstock said, "What I cannot understand is how you could ever bring yourself to forgive Reimer—ever think of forgiving him."

"I know."

Again silence fell between them. Then Shennan leaned forward and threw his cigarette into the fire. "As I get to this part of the story," he said, "I wonder how the idea of forgiveness ever was able to take possession of my mind."

He folded his arms over his chest and began very slowly to swing himself from the hips backwards

and forwards, his crippled legs hanging helplessly over the bedside, his eyes still directed to the fire.

"You will not understand," he said, "why my wife killed Hans Reimer unless I tell you this part of the story. But I shrink from telling it. It is bad for me to tell it. I have not told it to any one before. When the thought of it rises to my mind I always put it away from me, very often getting out of bed and turning on the lights to escape from it, for this part of the story frequently haunts me in the darkness as I lie waiting for sleep. It is very like a living devil, a devil that tempts me not to forgive, a devil, too, that would like to drive me mad.

"However, I will do my best to tell you; but you must bear with me, and try to remember everything, for it is my wife's defence."

He had stopped swinging himself, and now pushing himself farther on to the bed, he lay down upon his side, resting his head on his left hand, his crippled legs crooked along the bed, his right hand in the cord of his dressing-gown.

"We went to this lock hospital. The matron told us that the child we had come to see was dying. She said to us, 'It would be wicked, if we could do it, to keep her alive.' Then she looked at me, and said, 'I think you had better remain

here; I will take your wife to the ward, but you had better not come up.' I replied that I could bear anything, and my wife said, 'Yes, he ought to see.' Then we were taken upstairs.

"As we reached the door of the ward, the matron said to us, 'She is blind and her reason has gone. You must prepare yourself for a terrible sight. It will be impossible for you to recognize her, for the face is all eaten away.' Then she looked at us both, and said, 'I think it is unwise for you to see her; it will be such a dreadful memory.' My wife put her arm through the matron's, drawing her forward, and I heard her say, as I followed behind them, 'I want to know everything.'

"The ward was a long narrow hall with beds on each side, most of them with screens round them. In the middle were white enamelled tables, supporting basins of strong disinfectants and bottles and dressings. The nurses were moving to and fro without speaking. Sounds came from either side of the room, moanings, whimpering cries, and every now and then a deep heart-shaking groan. Through the long windows, most of which were open, bright sunlight streamed into the ward, with the rumble of traffic sounding from below.

"The matron stopped near a bed at the very end of the ward. She called the name of a nurse, and

a young fair-haired girl came from behind the screen. The matron asked how the patient was, and the nurse said, 'She is just the same.' They exchanged looks, and the nurse returned to the screen. 'Wait a moment,' said the matron, and going forward she pulled down the blind at this end of the ward, darkening the corner behind the screen. She then joined the nurse, and presently came back to us. 'Don't speak to her,' she said, 'and don't stay too long,' going forward again.

"The nurse looked up at my wife as we came round the screen; she was standing by the pillow with her back to the wall. My wife stood suddenly still, looking at the bed. I pushed my way forward, and when I saw what I saw I uttered a cry and stumbled against the matron, who supported me in her arms, and whispered to me, 'You had better go and sit by the window.' But I mastered myself, and getting close to my wife, I balanced myself on my crutches, and put my hand through her arm, drawing her close to me, and sobbing in the extremity of my grief.

"My wife was trembling from head to foot, but she uttered no cry. She stood there, half-way to the pillow, looking at the sightless and disfigured face, without tears, without even an indrawing of the breath.

"The child began to moisten her poor ulcerous lips, moving her head upon the pillow, and I saw that her teeth had fallen out, that her tongue was like a wound. I groaned and turned away my eyes, but my wife went quietly forward, knelt down and began stroking very, very gently the legs of the child under the white coverlet. The nurse moistened the poor lips with a piece of damp lint, and the child's head became still. Then, as if struck by something new in those strokings of my wife's hands, she began to speak, began to try to speak, uttering inarticulate sounds that drove the blood from my heart and filled me with madness. I turned away and hobbled to the window, sobbing and grinding my teeth. The matron helped me to a chair. 'She is not in pain, and it will not be long now,' she said to me gently, and gave me something to drink.

"I heard my wife and the nurse talking together in low voices. Then as I handed back the glass to the matron, I heard something that struck my heart like a blow. It was my wife crying the child's name—'Antoinette!—Antoinette!—little Antoinette!'—very softly, tenderly, beseechingly. The matron left me and went to the bed. I could bear to sit there no longer. I got upon my crutches and went to the screen. My wife had her arms round

the child and was kissing her upon her lips, and was saying, 'Antoinette! Antoinette!' the matron and the nurse touching her arms and gently trying to draw her away.

"The child uttered a sound, and seemed to be struggling to lift herself up from the pillow. I looked at her face, longing to see joy and recognition. Ah, dear God, no expression was possible there! My wife raised herself up, very slowly, and spreading her hands above the child's head, as though in blessing, she said to her, 'You are safe now; nothing can hurt you; you are quite safe now.' Then stooping down again close to the child's ear she said to her, 'I love you, my child, I love you.'

"I could bear no more, and turned away without any last look at the child.

"When we returned to the matron's room, my wife, who was calm now and perfectly self-possessed, said to her, 'You won't try to keep her alive, will you?'

"We went back to our apartments where we had arranged to meet the old woman who had discovered our child. My wife said to me as we drove home, 'I am sure it is Antoinette, but I want to know how this woman is sure.' She did not speak of the child's disfigurement or sufferings.

"The old woman told us that from a young girl twelve years of age, whom she had been the means of rescuing, she learned that a child eight years of age had been brought more than a year ago to one of the big houses on West Side. This child, she further learned, had told the girl of her home in Plainfield and had said her father was a cripple and had said that her name was Antoinette. Then the old woman had sent the girl to make more inquiries, and she had come back with the tidings that the child was now in a lock hospital, where she had been lying for three or four months. At the lock hospital she had discovered that the child was insane.

"My wife asked to see this little girl, and one day she was brought to us." At this point he began to speak quickly, in a tragical monotone, his hands working feverishly in his lap, his head swaying from side to side. "She said that she had known Antoinette from the first. She remembered her coming to the big house on Upper West Broadway because of her screams, which were so terrible, the most terrible she had ever heard. The woman in charge of the house thrashed her with a cane till she was black and blue, but the poor little child, forsaken by God and by man, continued to

scream, calling piteously—for—her father. Then the woman had summoned two negroes into the room, and had said to the child, 'If you don't stop crying I will tell these men to take you into a dark cellar and keep you there all night.' But the child still cried. The woman gave the signal, and the negroes seized her in their hands, shook her violently, made terrible faces at her, shouted ferociously at her, and bore her off, one of them pressing his hand over her mouth. They carried her to a cellar, and there they remained with her for three days and three nights. She was given neither food nor drink. She was cruelly flogged. Her clothes were taken away. She was tied down with cords on a board, and water was dripped upon her body; a goat, a gorilla were brought to frighten her. At the end of this torture she was brought upstairs one day to a room where this young girl was imprisoned. She was shivering and was put to bed, the girl set to look after her. The girl told us that for a whole day she said nothing, but lay with wide terrified eyes, her teeth chattering in her head, huddled up like a frightened animal. Then, on the following day, she caught hold of this girl's hands, and kept saying, 'The man on the cross, the man on the cross!' staring with terror from

side to side. She could not understand what the child meant, and when she first told us I did not remember that her last request to me had been to tell her about——"

He stopped speaking, turned his face to the pillow, and remained lying there for several moments without a sound.

Baverstock rose from his chair and walked to the other side of the bed. He was dazed with horror, speechless with shock and bitterness. It was impossible for him to utter a word of comfort to Shennan. He could not think connectedly, could not even tell how he was suffering. Stunned by what he had heard, dizzy as if he had leaned over some pit of unimaginable iniquity looking down into bottomless abomination, he moved through the shadow of the room, dazed and confused, stricken with an infinite disgust that was too vague and limitless for expression.

It felt to him that this silent room had suddenly become like a graveyard, and that the trunks and boxes on the floor, which impeded his way, were graves. A sense of death pervaded the room. He did not know why he was walking through the shadows to the other side, but when he arrived

there he went straight to the spirit-stove and, stooping down, examined the flame and lowered the wick. Then he went to the looking-glass and stood before it surveying his dusky reflection in the mirror and thinking to himself, "The kettle will soon boil." He moved to the window, drawing aside the blind, and looking out. The stars were shining thickly in a pale sky and the land lay dark, almost black, under the greenness of the upper air. He thought to himself, "I wonder what the time is."

As he let the blind fall and turned once more to the glow and shadows of the bedroom, the voice of Shennan came to him above the stir of the bubbling water in the kettle—a voice firm and strong, ready to go on with its tale.

"The girl told us that our little Antoinette was strange in her head all the time she lived in this house. She would talk of things which had no meaning, but every now and then she would say, 'I am called Antoinette,' or 'My father is lame, he has crutches,' and now and then, 'The man on the cross.' The girl also told us that the other women would coax her to tell them about God and the angels, laughing at her, but it was these very

tales of our poor child which had made the girl for the first time in her life, desire to break away from the bad house. It seems she was an intimate child who had been sold into the business by her mother at five years of age for two hundred dollars.

"Well, this made us quite sure that the child in the lock hospital was our very own child, and my wife went there every day to see her and was with her when she died.

"A few weeks after, we laid that little body which had suffered so terribly, in the earth, in the earth—God help me, it is not easy, not easy, I cannot tell you, to think of that hour——" He ceased abruptly.

After some moments, he took up his tale again in an even voice. "I returned one day," he said, "from aimless wanderings in the streets to find my wife alone with the old woman who had helped us to find Antoinette.

"I noticed that my coming checked their conversation and that my presence was unwelcome to them. After some minutes of this awkwardness my wife said to the woman, 'I will walk with you part of your way home,' and they went out of the room together."

He stopped, and turning his head, looked towards the stove, from which there came now a loud and excitable humming like the buzz of flies in a lime-tree. Baverstock got up from his chair and went across the room. Shennan pushed himself into a sitting position, and said, "I will make up the fire."

When Baverstock came round the bed with the tray the room was almost dark.

CHAPTER XIX

"WHEN my wife returned from that walk," said Shennan, "I asked her what the woman had come to see her about, and she said to me, 'I am seeking for this man Hans Reimer.' I started, for it had never occurred to my mind that we should endeavour to find him; indeed, the name Hans Reimer had scarcely made any impression upon my mind.

"For a moment or two I was so startled and alarmed that I could make no reply to this statement. My wife went to a writing-table, and sat down and began to write. Then I said to her, 'What is your purpose?' She did not turn her head and did not cease writing, but she answered, 'I want to tell him what he has done.'

"Now you must know that for a month and more I had set myself to rouse the conscience of the civilized world on this dreadful question, this international question, of the traffic in women. For one thing, it helped me to forget in some measure the

awful havoc, the awful, irrevocable ruin of my own life; for another, as you can well imagine, I was filled with a genuine passion to destroy this iniquity. I began by writing a series of articles. I called upon three or four editors to discuss these articles, and they said to me, 'The subject is stale; it has been overdone; and respectable people don't like it.' Very well; I went to my publishers. 'Carefully done,' they told me, 'such a book might sell a thousand copies, but not more.' Carefully done! Why, I wanted to pull the walls about the ears of civilization; I wanted to fill every Church in Christendom with wailing and lamentation; I wanted to raise from the women of the world flaming armies of unquenchable revolt. I said to them, 'This devilry has been delicately, hypocritically handled a score of times; if I write a book it will be in letters of fire, and I will spare nothing, nothing at all; I will hold the mirror of God up to the filthy visage of vice and up to the cowardly eyes of society; I want to stop the thing, to kill it, to wipe it off the face of the earth. I want to save children, not to interest a reader in an arm-chair.' They said to me, 'Write your book and let us see it; but mind, you must have facts, real facts; it's no use trying to make a scare without provable facts.' You may think what I felt! There are

some men who do not know what it is to suffer. Well, I went away and buried myself in this business. I studied it as I have never studied anything in my life before. I made myself acquainted with every link in the chain of this infamous slavery which is for ever moving across the world, dragging with it the souls and bodies of innocent and helpless children. Every nation is involved. Every State is responsible. Every Church is guilty. It isn't only America. America has done more than Europe in one direction, at any rate, to stop this abomination. She has at least faced it publicly, she has at least honestly examined it. Chicago, indeed, which people hold up as one of the worst cities in the world, led the way to all other cities of the world by appointing a Vice-Commission to report upon this horrible traffic. But, after all, this is useless. Every nation is involved, every State responsible, every Church guilty. It is the conscience of mankind alone which can end it; the dishonest policy of silence and suppression pursued by religion, respectability, and indifference shuts away from the conscience of mankind the knowledge—the knowledge—the knowledge—which alone can rouse and inflame that conscience. Well, I determined to strike a blow for honesty, for truth—for the truth which can conquer every coward's lie and every

hypocrite's deception. I lost myself, as I told you, in this study. It was the memorial I set myself to raise above the grave of my child."

He took his crutches into his hands, jerked himself off the bed, and stood in the darkness close beside Baverstock, who leaned back a little and glanced up at him doubtfully, without raising his eyelids.

"Mr. Baverstock," said Shennan vigorously, and with the sound of passion in his voice, "the only authentic and indubitable record of God possessed by humanity is the contrast which nature reveals to us in truth and hypocrisy, in beauty and ugliness, in goodness and iniquity. All the rest, everything written by the hand of man, is tainted with doubt, is indefinite with uncertainty. The very records of Christ are the field of an unending controversy. We cannot be certain, if we go by those records alone. All our divinity, all our theology, all our philosophy is a guess. Only in nature is the law of God written in constant characters, characters that cannot lie, cannot mislead, cannot be questioned—in nature and the soul of man. 'If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' That is the charter of the Christian. That's certitude! And if any man would understand the laws of God, let him look

upon nature, which rolls through space turning heaven day after day, and through all the ages existence, the everlasting contrast between day and night, light and darkness, truth and falsity, beauty and hideousness, goodness and evil. But how have we organized life? We have organized it so that this unchanging contrast shall not appear. The lines are blurred. Pleasantness would make a new picture; convenience and respectability would fashion a new world. We hide away the punishments of God, we cover over the wreckage of the broken laws of existence. It is a jest of the theatre that life as God made it is ugly and disreputable. Truth is a provincialism; beauty exists only in painted women or erotic art; goodness—that is suburban vulgarity. Life is tricked out and exhibited in false colours. Existence has become make-believe. Truth is no more to be seen at our feasts than the death's-head of the Romans. No; we are afraid of reality. But God made a world that is terrible and tremendous. Life struggles here towards light and towards darkness. The whole drama of this planet's history is the choice of life, the choice made by this struggling thing called life between light and darkness. And it is intended that men should flee to the light for fear and out of hatred for the darkness. The darkness

is only for those who love evil. But we hide away the darkness, and men fall into it unawares; they find themselves in the deep pit before they know that they have lost the sunlight and the air. Why, the supreme weapon of goodness is the hatefulness and terror of evil; the one contrast love can make with itself is this contrast with hideous iniquity. But the Church, having used up its future hell, fears to show men the present hell here under the blue heaven and under the stars. If men knew this veritable hell, if we made no pretence, if we revealed the truth, the reality of human life, how much more swiftly, then, would the ages hasten to the consummation of God's purpose!"

He moved back to the bed. "I am sure, perfectly sure, that I am right," he said slowly and more quietly. "But I did not intend, all the same, to say what I have just said. It is more important, so much more important, to say that we must forgive the sins of those who sin against us. I fear I was violent. Forgive me, and make allowance. I have taught myself by very long meditation to get a glimpse of that great and wonderful saying, 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' What a wonderful saying! Think for a moment—oh! but it must be for a lifetime—of what

that saying implies : what it means at the very heart of it."

He sat down on the edge of the bed, and after a moment of silence he repeated the words, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

As if speaking to himself, he added, "Yes, we must love goodness more than we hate wickedness, and we must be very patient with wickedness, waiting for the consummation of God; but we must not draw a veil over truth, we must not hide away our ugly places, we must not obscure the punishment of existence."

Baverstock rose from his chair and went to the chest of drawers where the tray was placed, and began to pour out the tea. He thought to himself, "Does this man think more of his book than of his child?"—and he began to feel contempt for the cripple.

"I have never heard of these things about which you have been telling me," he said; "and I cannot say I am happier or better for the knowledge. Certainly I do not feel inclined to practise tolerance or resignation. I am much more disposed to go out

and smash something. Life seems to me now a very filthy sort of business. I suppose it's all right for some of us, but it can only be all right even for us so long as we don't know about the rest of it. I think you have taken away my appetite to live. But, however, that's not particularly important. You must tell me the rest of the story; it's getting late."

Shennan took the cup from his hand, and said, looking up at Baverstock, "We shall see something of each other in future, and I must try and give you back what I seem now to have taken away from you. But for the present, as you say, I must get on with this story."

Baverstock poured himself out a cup of tea, and returned to his chair.

"I was telling you how I became absorbed in a book which I hoped might rouse, and which I still hope in its quite altered form may rouse, the conscience of mankind. During this time I was often in the lowest quarters of New York, and I began to renew my acquaintance with the people of Water Street. It was there one day that I heard from the very good woman whom I have spoken to you about, that my wife was plotting to assassinate Hans Reimer. And in telling me this truth, which I had begun to fear from what I had observed between

my wife and the woman who found Antoinette us, my friend told me the following story."

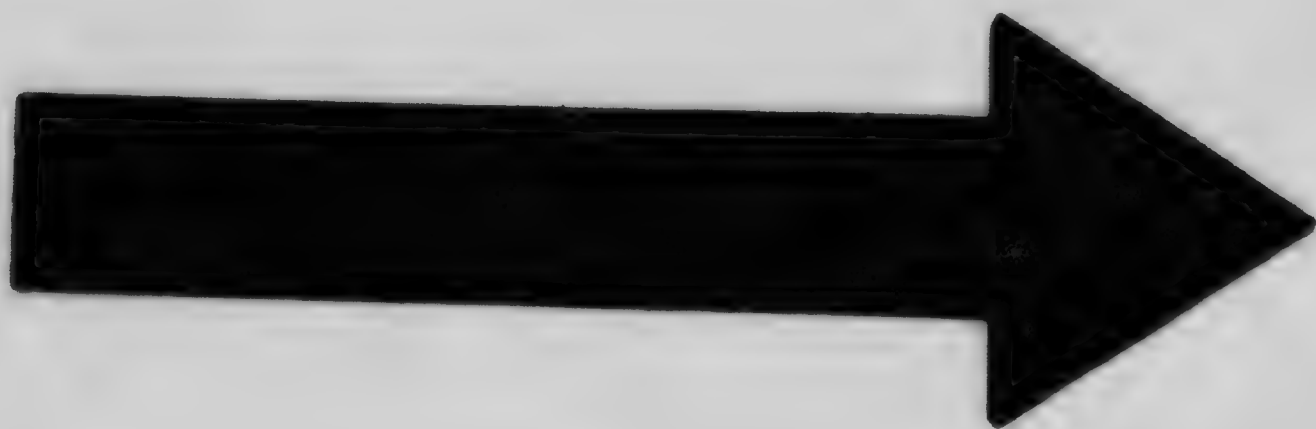
He drank from his cup and then lowered his lap.

"Hans Reimer, she told me, had all his life been at the head of a most powerful, daring, and principled organization connected with the world trade in women. But he had been careful to keep his own children not only out of this awful trade but in complete ignorance of the true nature of his employment. His eldest son, of whom he was fond, had married a girl of good family in Boston and lived in Montreal, where he was a partner in a bank. A few months before our discovery of Antoinette, Hans Reimer had gone to pay a visit to this son, and during the visit he had been taken seriously ill. He was so ill that at one time the doctors despaired of his life, and his son and daughter sent for their clergyman, who made his appearance at Reimer's bedside during a state of unconsciousness. When Reimer revived and the clergyman spoke to him he thought it was the doctor, but presently, realizing what had happened, he pointed to the door and said that he wished to be alone. The clergyman departed, and Reimer's daughter-in-law, entering the room a few minutes afterwards, was told by the sick man never to let

a clergyman come near him again. She said to him, 'But you are very ill, and we think you ought to see a priest who can give you the Holy Communion.' He said to her, 'I shall not die, if that's what you mean; and when I do come to die I shall want none of that humbug to help me.'

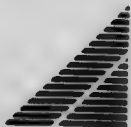
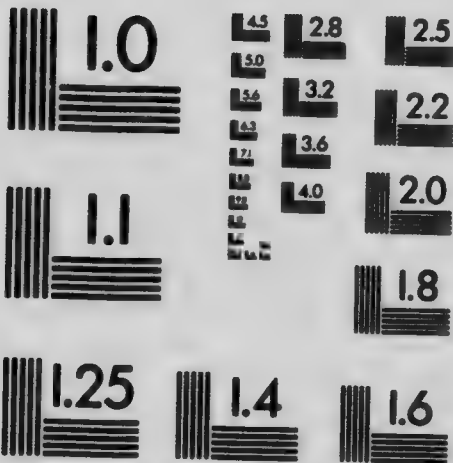
"It seems that when he was very much better and able to sit up in his bed, the eldest child of his son, a little girl five years of age, went unbidden into his room one day carrying an armful of her toys to amuse him. She placed these toys on the bed, and then, pulling up a chair, knelt upon it, and began to explain the different characters among the toys, telling him their history and what they did, and giving them the various names she had bestowed upon them.

"Reimer was amused, and told his daughter-in-law that the child was very much better medicine than the parson she had tried to foist upon him. His convalescence was a long one, and throughout this convalescence the child was his constant companion. Very gradually, it seems, the impact of the child's innocence and purity had its effect on Reimer's guilty soul. He became attached to the child, very affectionately attached to her, and could not bear that she should be out of his sight. When he was able to get out the child drove with him in



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the automobile, or sat with him in the woods at Mount Royal, or led him by the hand through their garden. I suppose from what I hear that child was the one thing Reimer had ever loved, and love is the greatest solvent in the world, the only magic. That child, trusting herself to the inhuman monster, and showing no fear of him, manifesting, on the other hand, tenderness and sympathy for him, changed his heart. She was not a very beautiful child, I am told, not, is——"

Baverstock interrupted him. "I have seen the photograph," he said.

"How is that?"

"Reimer showed it to me."

"Showed it to you? Then he carried it with him. Why did he show it to you—what made him do it, I mean? Did he ever tell you the story of his life?"

"No. But he told me a child had converted him from sin, and showed me the photograph. She wrote to him, I think."

"Ah, I understand! Yes, that is part of the story. Reimer came to realize his sin. He suffered remorse. He came to penitence. He found forgiveness. But he could not rest, he could not rest."

He handed his cup to Baverstock, who filled it again from the teapot in the fender, and brought it back to Shennan. As he turned away there was a knock at the door.

"Who is that?" asked Shennan, raising his head and looking towards the door.

"I expect it is Midgley," answered Baverstock.

"Midgley?"

"The man who owns this hotel." As he spoke he turned to look at Shennan, and noticed that he was sitting in a rigid posture and that he was pale and startled.

The knock was repeated, louder than before.

Baverstock turned and opened the door.

When he was outside in the corridor Midgley drew him a little distance away from the room, and holding up his candle in a hand that shook a good deal, he said to him, "The doctor has gone, but the sergeant is still here. I think you'd better come down and have another talk. He says he wants to speak to you." The tic-tac of the clock in the hall came to Baverstock's ears. It made him think of the murder.

Midgley's face was inflamed and his eyes fiery. Baverstock was unpleasantly conscious of a strong smell of brandy. It seemed to him, too, that an atmosphere thick, coarse, and sordid surrounded

this bearded man who was a little unsteady on his feet, and who held between the fingers of his right hand the stump of a cigar which sent a column of smoke into the air. To breathe the same air as this man seemed to Baverstock like pollution.

"I'll come down," he answered, "when Shennan has finished."

Midgley drew closer. "Has he told you why he did it?"

"Oh, you must wait, Mr. Midgley."

"He's quite calm about it, isn't he?" As Midgley asked this question he grinned, lurched a little, put the cigar between his lips; Baverstock could hear the singeing of his moustache and beard as the glowing stump glowed amongst the hair.

"You will learn everything to-morrow," he said, moving away; "and if you take my advice you had better lie down and get an hour or two's sleep."

Midgley advanced towards him. "Don't go away a minute," he said. "Look here, Mr. Baverstock, come down and have a drink; it'll do you good. We're snug enough down there."

Baverstock refused, looking Midgley steadily in the eyes.

Midgley blinked, and said, "There'll be a hell of a row here in a few hours, won't there? I don't like to think about it. Thank God that door

locked, and no one can get in now without the sergeant's leave. I wouldn't have my wife go in there for a fortune." He swerved and bumped against the wall, jolting his candle.

Baverstock looked at him, and said again, "Take my advice, Mr. Midgley, and lie down for an hour or two. You'll want all your wits about you in a very little time now."

"That's right, that's quite right. It'll take something to tell my wife, won't it? Ah, I'm not looking forward to that. And there'll be a crowd here, you may depend upon that." He straightened himself, put on a serious expression, and with his cigar between his fingers began rubbing the back of his head with the base of his palm. "My word, I've got my work cut out for me, and that's a fact."

"Well, go and lie down, like a sensible man."

The grin returned to Midgley's face. He let his head fall to one side, and said coaxingly, "You're sure you won't join us? Just for one dollop? Man, come along; it will do you good, put life into you; come on, then!"

It was not easy for Baverstock to get rid of the hotel-keeper.

As he walked back to the bedroom he felt a fresh disgust for life, and was so engrossed in this

contemptuous disgust that he did not notice the ticking of the hall clock, over whose faint rays of Midgley's candle was just then thrown the staggering waves of uncertain light.

Shennan was still sitting in an attitude of stolid attention. Directly Baverstock entered the room he asked, "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing at all. No. It was only Midgley wanting to know if I needed anything."

"Are they sitting up?"

"They have been sitting up, but I think they are going to lie down now."

"The proprietor, and who else?"

"The—doctor."

"But the police? Are the police here?"

"Only the sergeant. He's in charge of the night watch, I suppose. There's nothing to worry about."

As he said this as carelessly as he could, Baverstock took his cup to the hearth and began to warm it from the teapot.

He was surprised by Shennan's sudden expression of anxiety.

"If my wife had killed me and destroyed her home it would have been better," said Shennan.

"I shall be here to do what I can."

Shennan exclaimed suddenly, "But the ho-

the horror, the dreadful horror of it all! I have been through so much. I have suffered so terribly. I begin to feel that I have not strength enough for this ordeal. You see, it is not as if I could stand at my wife's side. I shall be separated from her. I shall be free, and she a prisoner. How dreadful that will be! And the long suspense, the long uncertainty, and the end of it—prison, prison for life. That has been coming home to me. Prison for life! How can I live when my wife is taken away from me, locked away from me, treated like a criminal! Do you think an hour will pass without my brain torturing itself with the question, 'What is she doing now?' No. That would be impossible. I shall be wretched, miserable, broken. To be anything else, to be calm, to be patient—why, this would be like adultery. I should be false to her, treacherous, selfish, a monster. How shall I live? What shall I do? It would be better if they killed her. I would rather, far rather, that they sentenced her to death. What can God be about that He permits such tortures and agonies? He has made us of flesh and blood. He isn't dealing with rocks and trees. If He knows, why is He idle? And besides, I've been thinking, I've been thinking, yes, I've been thinking, suppose

T

she is right? Why not? Why shouldn't so? Christ Himself said, 'Whoso shall of these little ones, it were better that stone——' Yes, drowned in the depth of the depth, the depth of the sea. The man Who hanged the millstone round about h The mother of a child he had offended. B millstone did she hang about his neck? been asking myself that. Whose millstone pose it is God's. Suppose it is God's m Well, then, if so, who dare punish her? say that in the court, do you think? Wo hear me? And yet——"

He stopped, breathing fast and hard, rolling, the sweat standing thickly on h head.

"I beg you not to distress yourself Baverstock; "I am perfectly certain yo will not be punished. The whole world wi her side."

"And yet, don't you see, we are told to enemies. Everything hangs on that. It's o which makes a Christian different from oth God may have millstones, but man must no them."

"Then man ought not to punish your wi

"You see, we came here to forgive Reimer. With the money which we had saved for Antoinette we searched the States and Europe to find the man who had destroyed her. I said to my wife, 'It is her money; she is sending us to lift the agony of remorse from his soul'; and my wife would say, 'Yes, she is living in us.' When we heard that his grandchild . . . Oh, think of that child! I had forgotten her. Think what she will say when she hears that her grandfather is killed. My wife had no right, because she had suffered, to pierce that little one's heart with pain. No; we must forgive. We must never think of vengeance. To think of vengeance is to doubt God and to deny His justice. I am shaken, I am weak, but I see now, clearly, clearly——"

Baverstock got up from his chair, and, carrying his cup to the mantelpiece, he said brusquely, "Look here, Mr. Shennan, the world is one thing for certain." He set down his cup and turned round. "It's a machine that does most of its own running," he continued, "but man *can* interfere, man *does* interfere; and unless man does interfere, the automatic running wouldn't amount to much. Whether one believes in a God or not this is plain, that man is at the head of things. That's our one

certainty. Nature may have laws, and God may have laws, but man has laws too, must have laws, and he has a right to hold them more sacred than all the other laws put together. Well, I say your wife has carried out one of humanity's imperative laws. I say that a man or a woman who saves Reimer's life and did not kill him——"

Shennan interrupted. "But the thing still goes on. Children are still being tortured. Violence never ends an evil and never accomplishes anything. Violence is always wrong. This killing of Reimer will not save a single child, will not close a single brothel. Besides, my wife killed the man to save her own vengeance, not to save children from torture. And Reimer had repented."

Baverstock returned to his chair. "You may do what you like," he said; "your wife is a splendid woman. I'll move heaven and earth to set her free. I believe in her action more than I believe in any book. And she will be set free. Don't you worry about that. There'll be such a howl in England that the law dares to punish her——"

"Oh, if she is set free I shall be happy," said Shennan; "and I believe that the day will come when she will see that I am right. I pray that we may both stand one day over Reimer."

grave and say together, 'We forgive you, in our little one's name. God rest your soul.'"

Baverstock, who had sunk far down in his chair, rather ashamed of having spoken so vehemently, raised his head, looked at Shennan, and said to him—

"Do you know, you make me feel sick."

CHAPTER XX

DAYBREAK came sullenly, grudgingly, like a man carrying a burden.

From the sea, which had been beautiful and almost silent under the stars, there rose now a deep and muttering complaint, laborious and slow, dragging itself upwards from unfathomable depths of discontent. The cold greyness of dawn crept over the face of the waves like the shadow of a cloud. As if a lid had been lifted, as if a door opened, a wind gradually raised its voice from the earth and filled the leaden air with a shudder of apprehension and the sense of agony and suffering. A man standing at the mouth of the river looking seaward might have felt the earth slipping gradually like a heavy cloak from the shoulders of the world; turning inland, he might have seen the earth quailing at the first touch of visibility, shrinking and recoiling from the light without sun, as a girl shrinks from the care of an old sensual man. The trees along the shore faintly bowed their branches in the wind.

the streets of the distant town, where the lamps were still burning, ascended a vague and muffled commingling of tired noises, as if men were lying down to sleep, not rising up to work.

Baverstock was conscious of one vivid, energetic, and overmastering desire as he left Shennan and walked along the still darkened corridor towards his own room. He longed for the sea. He felt that he must immediately wash away from his body some defiling substance which seemed to stick and adhere to his flesh like gum that fouls itself with grime of other things. The clothes he wore appeared to hang about him, and cling closely to him, like a disgrace. He was dishonoured by the shame of a guilty world. He felt that he must fill his lungs with clean air, and move his limbs vigorously and with passion in a pure element. There was a sensation of rigidity and tightness in his face; his legs felt heavy and clumsy; he put his fingers through his hair and rubbed at his head, feeling that it was dank and warm and numb. The house stifled him. The smell of human things disgusted him.

Reimer's locked door loomed like a ghost from the dark wall as he passed. Baverstock did not think of him, but thought of the clamorous vultures who would soon now gather about his body. He

said to himself, "It will be a dirty business, noisy one," hating to think that this dirty and business had its fingers on his shoulders, and very soon drag him out of natural obscurity hale him into the sordid presence of the g crowd.

When he had taken off his clothes and put dressing-gown, he picked up his towels, blew the candle, turned from the room, fastening cords of his dressing-gown. As he walked toward the stairs he heard a noise behind him, glancing over his shoulder saw Mrs. Mid coming round the bath-room corner, with a candle in her hand, her hair in pins, a shawl over shoulders.

She asked him if he had seen Midgley, and exclaimed in the same breath, "You surely are going to bathe in the dark, are you?"

He was annoyed at being caught in this manner and debated for a moment whether he should stop and tell her the news of the night, or leave that to Midgley.

As he hesitated she approached nearer, raising her candle a little examined his haggard and stricken face.

"Why, Mr. Baverstock," she cried with consternation and genuine anxiety, "whatever is the matter?"

with you? I never saw such a change in a person before. Why you're like an old man. What's happened?" She stopped suddenly, gaping at him. "You came to our room last night," she said quickly, putting a hand on his arm. "You called Midgley out. Something has happened. What is it?" Then a look of illumination shone in her eyes, and she said, "I know! I know! It's something to do with that Reimer. What is it? He isn't dead, is he?"

Baverstock told her the story, briefly, harshly, rather brutally. Yet as he told her he was thinking to himself, "She bears it better than her husband; she's superior to that lout; but how very ugly she looks in those hairpins."

Mrs. Midgley hurried in front of him down the stairs. She was white as death and her eyes were staring with horror, but she was thinking sensibly, and she did not chatter. As she opened the door of her husband's room, a sound of snoring came to Baverstock's ears, and glancing in that direction he saw that the lamp was still burning on the table and that the air was thick with smoke.

He crossed the hall as Mrs. Midgley began to call her husband, and before he reached the door he heard the voice of the sergeant speaking sleepily, and then Midgley's voice uttering an exclamation.

He opened the door and went out, grateful for the wind that blew into his face and stirred his hair.

The tide was low, and only at one point was it possible to find a place with water deep enough for diving. Baverstock clambered over the rocks to this point, feeling that he could not bear to wade into the sea. He laid down his towels, flung off his dressing-gown, and stood for some moments with his arms raised above his head, his body stretching upward, his eyes raised to the skies, his senses rejoicing in the cold wind which blew through him, and in the spray which struck his flesh in points of ice. As he stood there, words from the Bible came back to him, words to which he had listened years ago and which had never since recurred to his mind. He uttered them aloud twice over. "Wash you, and make you clean. Wash you, and make you clean." Then he relaxed his body, looked downward, and dived cleanly into the green water, clearing the weeds which matted the lower ledges of the rocks and which lifted and tossed him with the slop of the waves. He came up half-way across the pool, with his arms stretched out before him, his face under water, his legs still, lying there and letting the waves rock him to and fro; then he lifted his head, shaking the water from his eyes.

he struck out for the opening in the rocks, passing out to sea with a feeling of elation, a sense of joy in his body.

He was conscious now only of the sea and his presence there. Joy in life came back to him because he was thus bounded by thought. All the horror and disgust of the night were lost in a narrowing of consciousness to one single point. His being, as it were, rushed forward from its cave or kennel of memory and carried into a void universe which was without history and without future only the sense of existence, only a feeling of life, life that was impersonal and unrelated, that renewed itself by losing itself in an ocean of being.

He swam with a still falling tide a full mile from the shore, conscious only of the strange impersonal sense of existence. Then he stopped, trod water for a few moments, and looking about him saw that he had come too far. Life rushed back upon him then broken up into its myriad fragments. He said, "If I get back I shall be lucky," and began to swim slowly and steadily—a breast stroke that wasted neither muscle nor breath.

"The tide is stronger than I thought," he reflected, and began to look about him to see if he could discover a rock within easy distance. Then

he thought, "It's no use getting flurried," turned over on his back, floating with his head under his head, but working his feet to keep himself from drifting. "It's not much I've got back to," he thought, frowning at the skies. Lucilia's proud face passed before his inward vision and he saw Reimer lying in horrible mutilation and Midgley swaying over the body with a glass of brandy in one hand, a candle in the other. It never occurred to him that he should let them carry him away and drift him into the deep death. There was not much for him to go back but to go back was something that had to be done and the hard work, too, of getting back against the tide was something which if it were not accomplished would reproach him. He said to himself "I am getting cold," and turning over in the water began to swim steadily towards the shore.

The wind, which was with the tide and scarce broke the crest of the waves began to blow hard uttering a truculent sound at one moment, a drawn wail at the next. Baverstock could feel his hair drying on his head. He had to close his eyes. His temples chilled. The waves struck at his face and broke over his mouth and nose. He felt as if he was thrusting into a bank of solid water which pressed against his neck and breast, pushing

backward. His legs became heavy and tired. His arms grew stiff. He said to himself, "What a fool I was to come so far."

He trod water for a few minutes, troubled to find his breath going, and gazing anxiously towards the rocks. Then he felt himself become suddenly savage. He muttered a curse between his teeth, and leaning forward swam with tremendous power. In a few minutes he turned on his side and swam a bold and swift racing stroke, all the strength and passion of his body in every reach of his arms, every kick of his legs. He was indignant, angry, furious; not to reach the shore seemed to him an impossible, a most miserable defeat. His will ran through every fibre of his body with a renewal of life. Without weariness, without fear, the man fought against the sea, fought his way against the contrary tide, and drew nearer with every courageous stroke to the rocks of security. But he was swimming not to save his life, not in any panic fear of death, not because he loved life and wanted to live, but because of an instinctive force within the depths of his being which would not suffer him easily to brook defeat. When he shot his arm forward and clutched at the sea, instantly lunging himself onward as he threw the water behind him, he was thinking angrily of his body's disobedience,

forcing it vengefully to do his will, as a man forcing an animal to obey him.

When he turned upon his breast it was to discover that he was near the land but not at the point where he had left his things. For a moment he thought of swimming round to the deep but at the next, striking his feet on sand, he staggered forward on trembling legs, almost falling head foremost, he realized that his body was entirely spent. He fell gasping on his knees, chin just out of the water, and waited for his strength to return, conscious of an exquisite pain. When he tried to move he found that his limbs were entirely without power. His muscles seemed to have turned to stone. He felt that he could not roll over, that the effort to keep his head above water was more than he could sustain, that the agony which racked him from head to foot was unbearable. The agony of a beaten will and a broken consciousness turned the screw of torture and made him groan in his gaspings. He felt himself sinking and wishing to swoon because of the pain and utter exhaustion that consumed him. He let himself fall forward, but in falling he clutched hold of the sand and pulled himself further in, crawling forward, choking in the water, lifting his head again, groaning out, "God help me!"

Suddenly he lost the feeling of extreme weakness, and found his brain steadying itself, his will integrating its force. He waited, and then, raising himself on bent legs, walked slowly forward, his teeth chattering, his lips twitching, his eyes bloodshot and burning. "That was a near squeak," he thought, and raising himself gradually upright as he got into quite shallow water, he laughed at the grotesque stiffness of his legs, which made him walk so oddly, and noticed how extraordinarily light and hollow he felt in spite of this rigidity. The water dripped from his body leaving him dry and cold.

He sat down on the sand and tried to rub his chest and arms, but found himself too stiff for this action. "I must wait," he thought, "till my breath comes, but it's deucedly cold here all the same." Then he tried drawing deep breaths to send the blood circulating through his body, but it was not easy, and seemed to pierce his lungs with a knife. "Well, I must move my legs, then," he thought, and began to work then up and down.

He grew colder and colder.

"This is all very fine," he said to himself, "but it's winter," and he got up, and began to run towards the rocks, stiffly, painfully, his face blue, his body purple and pink, the skin curdled. He

laughed at the crook in his knees. "I must be pretty funny," he thought.

As he clambered over the rocks to possess himself of his dressing-gown and shoes he missed his footing and fell upon hands and knees, sliding backward. He picked himself up and saw that the skin of his knees was pencilled with scarlet scratches. His hands were numb from the fall and yet tingled sharply with pain. His knee was horribly sore so that he winced as he walked.

While he was rubbing his body dry with a towel he felt something warm oozing under his feet. He looked down and saw that he was bleeding. When he came to examine the wound he discovered that he was badly cut. He thought of the murder, and reflected, "That fellow won't walk any more." He wondered how he should bind up the wound, and felt in the pockets of the dressing-gown for a handkerchief. "No luck," he said; "I must tear up Mrs. Mitchell's towel," and he thought how ugly she had been in her curling-pins. His hands were shaking so violently, his teeth were knocking in his head, and his body was blue with cold. It was not easy for him to tear a bandage from the towel and tie it round his foot.

As he limped back from the rocks he looked

at the hotel and reflected that all the inmates save one had now opened their eyes. Another day had come, but Reimer did not know it. What would Louisa have to say about this murder, and old Trewent? Reimer wouldn't know what they said. Reimer was dead when the stars were shining. He had been dead six or seven hours. He had by this time experienced six or seven hours of hell-fire and damnation. Any way he was dead.

Then the long story of Shennan came back to his mind, and he seemed once more to be smoking cigarettes and drinking tea in that hot bedroom with the fire glowing between the bars, and the open boxes and trunks, plastered with labels, littering the floor. Suddenly he exclaimed, "My God, shall I ever forget last night?" and he looked up, a frown on his forehead, anger in his eyes, bitterness at his mouth. "Dead, and serve him damned well right, too!" he exclaimed. His eyes glanced up at Reimer's window. "They'll be in no hurry to pull up that blind," he thought, and felt that the window had a sinister appearance as though something horrible and unnatural was imprisoned behind it.

He came round the corner of the wall, still limping, and saw Trewent hurrying towards his cottage.

At sight of this old man a new and a strange feeling rushed upon Baverstock. He checked himself and stood waiting for Trewent to get out of his sight. It was as if Trewent represented for him the dark and iniquitous world which had hitherto worn a mask of hypocrisy before him, but which he now saw to be a very loathsome and vile world. It was as if Trewent had known everything which Sherrin had told him in the night, and as if he had been laughing in secret because Baverstock did not know it. He felt the night's disgust of life come in upon him, but now without excitement or morbid curiosity. It was not Reimer he hated, but the world. His innocence had been torn away with his ignorance, and he felt himself stained and defiled with his knowledge of this real and veritable world which he hated with his whole soul. "I shall never like to look in a human face," he reflected.

When Trewent was out of sight, he limped forward, sick at the thought that he would probably find Midgley and the sergeant in the hall. How could he face the world? He looked through the glass panel of the door and saw nobody. He turned the handle guiltily like a thief, crept in and hurried across the hall. He became conscious of the clock as he climbed the stairs, but he was not thinking of the guilty world, not of the murder.

It was some time before he could stop the bleeding of his foot. He dressed hastily, unable to spare the five minutes necessary for his shaving, and hastened downstairs again. Louisa crossed the hall, and he pulled up, apprehensive and uncomfortable.

"Here's a nice thing!" she exclaimed, and flung up her hands. "I always did say there was something queer about that man, didn't I?"

"Where's Mr. Midgley?" asked Brerstock, his lips still twitching with cold. He did not look at her as he spoke, but affected to be concerned with the buttons of his tunic.

"The lame gentleman sent for him. He and Mrs. Midgley and the sergeant are all together in his bedroom. I've just taken them some tea. I think he's telling them the story. He seems terribly put about; wild-looking, he is, and no wonder; but yesterday, why I thought he was more like a woman than a man."

Baverstock said, "Well, I'm going over to Baskerton. Tell them if they ask for me."

"You look nearly dead already," said the maid. "Why don't you take something to eat before you start. I can see what it's done to you, this murder; it's made an old man of you. You look something dreadful, Mr. Baverstock, you do, really."

"I must start at once," he answered, pulling one of his gloves; "but you might give me a couple of biscuits to eat as I go along."

While he waited he thought of Shennan and his dreadful story to the Midgleys and the sergeant, and this loquacity, this want of reserve and restraint, deepened his feeling of disgust for the woman who had killed Reimer and who had done so without a word to her punishment attracted him more and more. There was a classical grandeur about her deed; there was nothing but a morbid decadence in the religious chatter of the majority.

Lousia came hurrying forward with a tray and the sound of a teaspoon clinking against a saucer gave to Baverstock a feeling of pleasure.

"A cup of tea will do you good," she said. "I haven't been made more than eight or ten minutes. Then, glancing at him she added, "Why your teeth are chattering with cold!" She poured the tea, and he began to eat the bread and butter she had brought for him.

"I'm stone cold," he said.

"The tea will warm you."

"I'm glad you're not a jabberer," he went on taking the cup. Then, feeling a smart of pain in his foot he added, "I slipped on the rocks this morning, Louisa. Is that a sign of good or bad luck?"

"You ought never to go bathing in the winter," she replied: "I'm quite sure it can't be good for you. As for luck, didn't I say the first time I set eyes on him that this American gentleman wasn't going to bring us any luck? Still, all the same, I didn't want him to be murdered. Murder's a dreadful thing. They say she did it out of revenge. I suppose he must have injured her one way or another."

Baverstock finished his tea. "I must go," he said.

There was a feeling of sun in the grey heavens as he mounted his bicycle. The chill was evaporating from the dawn; a pale glitter floated on the steel-coloured surface of the river. Every now and then a faint shadow could be seen on the road. "Well, I could talk to her all right," he reflected; "I suppose I shall get used to it in time."

When he arrived in Baskerton the clouds had thinned, the sun was almost visible, and the sea sparkled with light. A strong wind was blowing, which gave a sense of battle to the morning, and the moist sun fighting its way through spinning clouds of mist added to this feeling of conflict.

Baverstock inquired for the house of Mr. Crickmay, and found the lawyer reading his letters beside a Bible on the breakfast table. He told his

story in a quarter of an hour. While he was speaking a parlour-maid brought in the dishes and lighted the spirit stoves of a hot-plate. The lawyer said he would hire a car and drive over to Sandringham immediately after breakfast. He asked Baverstock to stay, but Baverstock declined, for he had another business on his mind. The lawyer rang the bell for prayers and the children of the house were sliding noisily down the banisters, as Baverstock left the house. "Those people are happy enough," he thought to himself; "but they're ignorant of the truth of things." He wondered if professional knowledge of life, such as a lawyer's, was the same as common knowledge.

He rode to the Cavendish Hotel, and asked to see Miss Roach, who was not yet downstairs. He told one of the servants to go up and let her know that he was there, saying that he wished to see her on a matter of importance. Then he crossed the hall-lounge and went into the garden to wait for her. His foot was hurting him sharply. It was painful to walk. He sat down on the first seat he came across, and began to think what he should say to Miss Roach. He examined the bruised palm of his hands which were still numb and pricking from his fall on the rocks; gripping the handles of his bicycle had caused him considerable pain.

"I shall be glad when this is over," he thought.

While he was sitting there he heard the latch of the gate jingle over the catch, and looking up saw Lucilia coming round the bushes from the cliff. He was conscious of no emotion at sight of her, nor did he feel that he should rise and go forward to greet her. It seemed to him that it would be better if he pretended not to see her, and he turned his head away before she had caught sight of him, laying his arm along the back of the seat.

He heard her steps on the shingle path drawing nearer. He was extraordinarily calm, even listless. His heart did not quicken its beats. He would have liked to look at her, but he did not want to speak to her. He raised his forearm and let his face rest in the cup of his hand. "Good Lord," he thought, "I haven't shaved!"

Lucilia came towards him. He found himself trembling. He felt guilty and unclean. He hated himself for his knowledge of a vile, devil-ridden world. How could he look this pure girl in the face?

"Good-morning," she said, and stood looking at him.

He turned his head. There was a rush of something through his body, and a feeling of sorrowful pain at his heart. He managed to say, "I've come

over to see Miss Roach." He got up, but did not advance towards her, and did not look at her.

"Have they sent up to her room?"

"I think so."

"I'll go and see."

"I should be glad if you would; the truth is I'm busy this morning; I haven't got more than five minutes to spare."

"Can I take a message?"

"No. If Miss Roach isn't ready, I'll write a note and leave it."

She entered the hotel, and he sat down on the seat again, wondering at himself. He did not see that she paused in the doorway and looked back at him.

As he waited in the garden he thought to himself, "I can't look her in the eyes now. I was glad to get rid of her. What has happened to me? Yesterday I should have lost my head with such a chance as that."

He noticed how the sunlight quivered on the wind-blown bushes of the garden, and felt a desire for some force to break an entrance into his mind and shake into commotion the heavy burden of his stagnant thoughts. "They say I look like an old man," he reflected; "I feel very like a dead one."

In a few minutes Miss Roach came to him, without Lucilia. She looked pale in the morning light, and the lines in her face seemed much deeper; she walked with an effort, leaning heavily on her stick.

"Well," she said, as he got up from the seat, "you haven't kept your word. Still I won't be cross." She was looking at him closely. "I can see what has happened." As she sat down, she added, "Lucilia seems to have noticed a change in you, too. Come, I thought you were made of finer stuff."

He sat down and said to her: "I haven't come about myself. If I look ill it's only because I haven't shaved."

"Oh, you haven't shaved!" She laughed gruffly.

"I was up all night, and I had to see a lawyer over here first thing this morning. I'm sorry to appear before you in this condition." He looked at her, and said with rather more energy, "I've come to tell you that you ought to take Miss Marston away at once. There has been a very horrible tragedy over at our hotel. It's likely to make a hideous stir. She'll hear every word of it if she stays here, and it's an exceedingly ugly story; it might do her harm. If you go away and keep

the newspapers out of her reach she won't about it."

"What sort of tragedy?" She was regarding him curiously.

"Well, a murder."

"A murder!" She raised her eyebrows.

"You remember that American Miss Ma disliked?"

"Yes; indeed I do."

"A woman who arrived yesterday afternoon murdered him last night."

"Why did she do that? Do you know?"

"It's an appalling story. All I can tell you this, she had good reason for what she did."

"Can't you tell me any more? I'm not a boy."

"Well, he was the means of ruining her character."

"Ah!"

She turned quite round to him, her face pale and hard, an earnest penetration in her eyes.

"The man was a devil," said Baverstock.

"I've no doubt he was. Do you mean that he was a trafficker?"

"Yes. But how do you know of such things? He looked away from her, and said, "Until last night I had no idea that the world was such a filthy place."

"Then you are one of the victims."

"What does that mean?"

"You are a victim of society's conspiracy to hush these things up." She dug in the shingle with the ferrule of her stick, and added, "Lucilia is another victim."

He started and looked at her.

"Tell me," she said, without raising her eyes from the ground, "was the child any age or was she quite young?"

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, sitting suddenly forward and leaning his arms on his knees, "do you really know about these hideous devilries!" He kept his head down, his eyes on the shingle.

She looked across at him, and answered, "I study them. I am working to expose them. Tell me about this child."

"She was seven or eight," he replied, not changing his attitude. He wondered that he could make this terrible statement so calmly and without a shudder.

"That is not so very young for these monsters. Their traffic begins with babies of two and three years of age. Thousands of their victims are dead before seven or eight. Tell me, now, did it happen in America or in this country?"

He answered hoarsely, "In America. But you say babies——"

"It is just as bad here."

Baverstock exclaimed furiously, "Then v God's Name isn't it stopped?" He sat up crossed his arms over his breast, and stared in of him.

"Those who have the power to stop it, dan and those who might force them to stop it, to believe that it is true. Vice has a very fir policeman in Respectability. People don't w be told about disagreeable things."

"But babies of two and three years of age you mean to tell me that people——"

"Listen! These babies can be bought al London for a five-pound note. There is no s about it, and no sensationalism. They are ad Societies engaged in rescue work know no about this branch. Ask them about the white traffic and they will tell you that the storie exaggerated. So they are. That is quite Only in very rare cases is a girl kidnapped drugged. Not very frequently, perhaps, is a y girl trapped by an advertisement or deceived theatrical agency. But the most wicked abominable branch of this traffic never comes u their notice. They are as ignorant of it as you The girl on the streets is one thing; the ad child locked up in an evil house is another thi

Baverstock said, "Why don't you stop it if you know about it?"

She smiled as she answered grimly, "We are governed by men, Mr. Baverstock; and a blow at this traffic would be a blow at that section of society which still exercises the greatest power of government, that section of society whose safety depends on hushing up the abominations of vice. But we are going to stop it all the same. We are only holding our hands, believe me, till we are perfectly certain that our blow will shatter the iniquity once and for all. Wait a little, wait a little!"

Baverstock got up from the seat. "Shatter it soon, for God's sake!" he exclaimed; and giving her his hand, he said without looking at her, "I must go. What a loathsome thing life is!"

She held his hand, and replied: "You must wait, and take your breakfast with us; I want to say something more to you."

"I must go back. I have got to give evidence."

"It isn't quite nine yet; can't you stay for a quarter of an hour?"

"To tell you the truth I don't feel like talking."

"No; I can understand that. But you look ill and tired; stay and eat breakfast. Yes, I insist. You mustn't go empty to the police-court. Do you know you look very ill?"

"I am not ill, but I am out of love with li

"Of course you are."

"I think it's a beastly thing, a very beastly sickening thing."

"So does Lucilia."

He started again. "You said that she was a victim like me of ignorance and silence."

"Yes, and the knowledge came to her suddenly as it has come to you, only more terribly. It was the shock I told you about last night."

He was cold as ice. "She knows!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say she really knows about those filthy abominable things?"

The old lady regarded him for some moments with a compassionate scrutiny. Then she said, "I think I will tell you. And do you know why I was disposed to tell you? Lucilia said to me just the other day, 'Mr. Baverstock is here, and he looks quite different.' There was a new interest in her voice. She said to me, 'He looks like a man who has suffered a great deal.' I thought to myself, 'Lucilia, you are changing your mind, your life is mending,' and I asked her if she would like you to stay for breakfast. She said, 'Yes; and I should like him to take me for a sail.' I waited a moment and then inquired why she liked you better to-day than yesterday. She said, 'He is different.' Take my advice, and stay."

Baverstock sat down again. "Do you mean that there is hope for me?" he asked. His heart was beating quickly, but more with amazement than hope.

"I think there is; at any rate I permit myself to hope that there is hope for you, *and for her*. You see, it would be a very great thing for her to love a man. I want her to do that. I think you are a man she might care about. I am using you for her sake."

"But why has she changed so suddenly?"

"Because you have changed."

"I feel now as if I dare not speak to her. But how am I changed? Do you mean that I look broken up?"

"Yesterday you were a youth; this morning you are a man. Last night was a shaping hour in your destiny."

"And my youth will never come back."

"No; it will never come back."

"I realize that I must have seemed a fool, a thoughtless fool, to any one who knew the truth of life. But I don't know whether I am any better for my knowledge. I tell you how I feel. I feel unclean. And I feel bruised. Do you know that feeling of sickness which comes to one after a fall on the back of the head?"

She said to him, "Your youth will never back, but your manhood can be a brave one. You will be happy if you understand that life is an immense conflict between good and evil, especially if you put yourself on the side of good with a sword in your hand, and keep the faith of eternity in your soul."

Lucilia came to them from the hotel. Her absolute beauty and the pride of her youth struck them both as the very violence of contrast to the conversation.

"Will you take me for a sail after breakfast?" she said to Baverstock. "There's a fine wind, but the sea is just rough enough." Her voice was clear and sympathetic.

He rose to meet her. "I'm sorry, I can't. I've got to go back."

Disappointment appeared visibly in her eyes. She looked towards her aunt, and then away towards the sea, as though her invitation had cost her an effort and its refusal had thrown her back upon herself.

"You could come over this afternoon," said Mrs. Roach.

"But aren't you going away?"

"No."

Lucilia looked at her aunt. "Going away?" she asked.

"I might be able to come over this afternoon," said Baverstock. "I should like to go for a sail."

Miss Roach said to Lucilia, "Mr. Baverstock thought that I might be going away, but I think we will remain a week or two longer. Go and tell them to get breakfast at once, breakfast for three."

When she had gone, Miss Roach said to Baverstock, "Walk with me on the grass a moment, and I will tell you about that poor girl. You ought to know, for it may decide your course of action. And I know I can trust you. You will never repeat it. Let me tell you I thought of you a great deal last night after you had gone. It wasn't easy for me to send you away."

He limped at her side, but she did not notice his lameness.

The wind blew at her short grey hair and the sun shone upon her strong masculine face as she leaned on her stick and walked beside Baverstock, her broad shoulders raised, her head bent, her eyes on the ground.

"Two years ago, Lucilia went to stay with some

friends in Sussex," she began, speaking decidedly, doggedly, as though she had a long and difficult narrative to unfold. "Among the guests was a certain woman, a lady of title known in London society, who made a great deal of Lucilia, flattering her, paying her compliments, fondling her, kissing her, and telling her that she must come and stay with her in London. The girl was pleased by this attention, for the woman was the chief guest in the house, and she wrote home once asking her mother if she might accept of the invitation to stay in town. Permission was granted and she went. There were a number of middle-class society men in the house and a few smart women. One night, after some larking dances, the hostess took Lucilia to her bedroom; she suggested that the child should try on a dress which she would like her if it suited her. The girl did not like the dress but was too diffident and nervous to show her repugnance. She took off her dress and the woman expressed dissatisfaction with her undergarments and insisted that she should take them off and put on some new things which had just arrived. At the same time she began to undress herself. Lucilia had put on the new garments when the door opened and a man entered in night things with a silk jacket.

over them. For five or ten minutes this brute laughed and jested with the lady, who pretended to be cross with him, but cross in a flippant and smiling way. Lucilia was dazed with nervousness. She was young and innocent; she did not like to express even astonishment at a proceeding which the other woman treated only as a jest. Then this woman began to express admiration for Lucilia to the man, and he, treating her as a child, made her stand with him in front of a glass, and told her to put herself in this attitude and that, moving her body with his hands. She tried to treat the matter as a joke, because the man and woman were laughing, but her mind was distressed and she was dreadfully frightened. Presently the man said to her, 'You are only a little girl, a mere child,' and took her into his arms and began kissing her. She struggled to be free from him, but he held her, and the woman, coming quite close to her, said, 'I'm horribly jealous; that's how he kisses me,'—laughing and unfastening Lucilia's hair. Then the poor child began to feel alarmed. She struggled with force. The man tightened his hold. Lucilia cried out. The woman told her not to be a silly little innocent, saying that she ought to love a game of that kind, which was the game every pretty girl

was meant to play. There was a horrible m in which she felt herself lifted off her feet. devil of a man carried her towards the bed. she struck at him with both her hands and scro with all her might, and kicked at his legs. threw her on the bed. She sprang up, struck in the eyes, and rushed to the door. The w tried to stop her. She reached the door, turned handle, and tugged at it; but the door was lo The man and woman came towards her, pleading and entreating, smiling and laughing; the child sank on the ground and lay there with tering teeth, her arms crossed over her breast soul frozen with terror. They realized that in case their stratagem would not work. The woman pretended to be furious with the man, and locking the room, turned him out. She then deavoured to calm Lucilia, saying it was only a game, but the child had now begun to rave would not listen to her. Lucilia remembered nothing till she woke next morning in her room, with a maid putting tea by her side. She sprang out of bed and wanted to leave the house then and there. The maid told her that she was needlessly alarmed, entreated her to return to bed and promised to remain with her. She then informed Lucilia that these *pranks*, as she called

them, were quite common in that house, and common in society, and advised her not to say anything about the event of the previous evening. And she gave a reason for this advice. 'If you talk about it,' she said, 'people will think you are vicious.' That was Lucilia's introduction to the sex question. When she returned home she was afraid to mention the matter. She became exceedingly ill. For weeks they despaired of her life. When she recovered it was with her nervous system a wreck. I managed to get her to tell me the story, and ever since then I have been trying to restore her in body and mind." She rubbed a crumpled handkerchief across her eyes. "There; now you know Lucilia's story," she said briskly. Then in a lower voice, "Think it over as you ride back; think it well over; and don't come for the sail this afternoon unless you feel that you want to hope for better things."

She paused and looked up at him, her right hand resting on her stick, her grey and wrinkled face raised to his with a smile that was confident of his answer. But there were still tears in her eyes.

Baverstock said, "Why am I so dead calm?" Throughout her narrative he had suffered so exquisite a torture that sweat had broken from his body.

"I can't tell you!"

"Yesterday," he exclaimed hoarsely, his hardening, his teeth set, "I should have asked for that man's name and I should never have till I had near murdered him! It would have been a glorious thing to slay that devil. But no. Well, I only feel deadly sick. I don't want to hurt any one. I just want to turn my face to the wall. All the stuff's gone out of me." He added suddenly, "I understand now why Miss Marston left the world. I should not care to think she liked to think that she—— No, it doesn't do to think about it. God, what a thing is human life! Isn't half the world drowned in the depths of the sea?"

Miss Roach, watching him carefully, said: "Your shock is wearing away, and your shock will wear away. Listen to a wise old woman. Hold on to hope with both hands and remember that for thousands and thousands of people, life is something more than tolerable. Life can be good and strong, yes, and happy, even in this world, where evil spirits are still taking possession of human beings, and where the degradation and perversion of beautiful things is the master method of the devil. You know something, but you do not

know everything. The very existence of dreadful iniquity is a proof to you that life is conflict. That's the whole secret. Life is a solemn business, a great struggle. And the knowledge that God does not interfere ought to be a proof to you that He expects you to interfere. That's the one inspiration."

He stared at her. "How on earth," he demanded, "can you believe in a God, knowing what you know about those babies?"

She nodded her head. "Ah, that's how you feel, is it?" she asked. "Well, I'll answer your question another day, when we've got more time. I'll give you a little of my theology to add to your engineering. It won't do you any harm. Always think of yourself, my friend, as in the making. None of us ever finishes here."

At this moment Lucilia came from the hotel and approached them across the lawn, looking towards the sea as she advanced, the wind stirring her hair and beating at her dress.

Baverstock raised his eyes, which were still heavy with the griefs of disillusion, and looked broodingly at her for a moment, watching her as she slowly approached from the other end of the garden, and saying to himself, "She knows!"

Then he lowered his eyes.

Although he stood there, looking on the girl, ashamed to regard her, afraid to raise his eyes, watch her approach, he became suddenly reverently certain that this girl, whose innocence had been violated but whose soul and body still pure, was bringing to him with every step her advance—bringing to him at every moment his waiting—the boon of healing and the blessing of hope.

Something had been taken from him in the night—his innocence which was not a merit, his ignorance which was not a virtue, his selfishness which was in the nature of a sin: this had been taken away from him, but something greater now to be given. Life had suddenly become terrible to him, but greater and grander, full at last of understandable significance. With love given to him he could draw a sword on the side of righteousness and live with the energy of eternal battle in his soul.

He raised his eyes when Lucilia was quite close to him and let them rest upon her beautiful face tranquilly and with desire for her consolation.

But as he looked at her, feeling that life was calling him from a long stupor, feeling that

would live and be glad of life, he thought to himself, "I was saved from drowning a few hours ago only to slip and cut myself on the rocks. That was an anti-climax; perhaps it was also an omen."

And he looked away from Lucilia, and began to walk towards the hotel talking to Miss Roach with his eyes bent upon the ground.

THE END

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